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A PAMPHLET FROM THE U.S.

A printed announcement recently received from the U.S. gives information of a *Poetry Awards* project, offering over $3,000 for various poetry contests, the aims of which are outlined in the introduction here quoted:

" The awards to a young poet, even of potential genius, are so slight that, except in extraordinary cases, he has neither great audiences nor returns of recognition or of financial recompense. Therefore he finds little encouragement to put forth the best in him. Furthermore, his media of publication have been constantly shrinking; cults and coteries have taken possession of much of the field, and many of our great publishing houses look upon poetry as an unwanted stepchild.

" In recognition of these facts and with the aim of stimulating genuine poetic voices that might otherwise pass unheard, Poetry Awards has been established to support whatever is best in poetry without regard to "schools." It deplores the antagonism developed by the ardent protagonists of these cults, who are dividing the field of poetry into hostile groups, fanning the ugly fires of intolerance. It is the belief of the sponsors of Poetry Awards that this is not the way to aid the production of creative poetry, which must always fight for tolerance and freedom. This then will be our chief objective—to support the new urge for a saner world of ideas, freeing young poets from the ill-effects of a bitter atmosphere, and giving them opportunities for self-disciplined expression unbound by the strictures of any cult."

Whilst we have not sufficient space to give details of the actual awards* we feel compelled to applaud this attitude, upholding as it does, the right of the individual poet to be judged on his own merit and not on that of any school to which he is said to belong. Literary cult-obsessions may exalt the ego of the poet who lacks originality, invention and inspiration but their dangers are manifold, both to poet and critic. The group poet, unless he is very strong, loses any individuality of style he might at first possess, and usually ends by writing mere *pastiche* of the strongest poet in his group: the group critics are often blinded by loyalty to their particular sect and their judgment of poetry in the largest sense, is prejudiced.

For these reasons we commend *Poetry Awards* as having initiated an admirable scheme of the widest possibilities; poets, known and unknown, on both sides of the Atlantic will be invited to submit work under pseudonyms for unbiased consideration by a board of judges.

MURIEL SPARK.

*Further particulars of *Poetry Awards* are available from The Editor, *Poetry Awards*, 1420 East Mountain Street, Pasadena 7, California, U.S.A.

HÉLÈNE

Azur! c'est moi . . . Je viens des grottes de la mort.

IAIN FLETCHER

Eyes azure-blind, I come from caves of doom.
I hear the waves that stun the sonorous stair.
I see the long-ships on white mornings, loom,
Moving out of darkness. Oars upon the air
Weave threads of gold. My solitary hands recall
Bodies of long-dead Princes dear to me,
Who sung once of dark triumphs and the fall
Of their proud prows among the toppling sea.

I hear the solemn shells and trumpets rouse
Pulsing to motions of the oars' alarms,
High songs of oarsmen shaping the tumults;

The Gods erect on those exalted prows,
In ancient laughter, whom the spume insults,
Strain towards me with indulgent arms.

MISTY EVENING

PAMELA A. CONSTANTINE

The mist falls like a beard about the trees
That stand without root or foliage in a wood
Of darkness. Leaves make little empty sounds
Falling in bloodless snatches to the dusk,
Lost till they flower in petals of flaming coal
In another age. The little rustling birds
Are left, like our dreams, in rest. Now colour turns
White on the boughs, like snow. The seeping mist
Peers through the naked forestways and draws
Her yellow skirts together over our doom.

GULF OF GEORGIA

EARLE BIRNEY
(VANCOUVER)

Come where the seal in a silver sway
  like the wind through grass
goes blowing balloons behind him.

Lie where the breakers are crashing like glass
  on the varnished sand
writing their garrulous arabic.

Dive from the shining fluted land
  through the water's mesh
to the crab's dark flower and the starfish.

Trail the laggard fins of your flesh
  in the world's lost home
and wash your mind of its landness.

A DREAMER

HUGO MANNING

The uniform reminds that he is no torn Christ;
By the dying city he rests his handsome head.
For him life was a fiddler with a broken bow,
His promised land, only a feather bed.
Now near the fox-hole he lies as one dreaming he is glad;
His blood hardly stains the thawing snow.
O soldier do you still dream that your sweetheart is faithful,
That the dead have risen and the world is not mad?

THE TOWERS IN THE WIND

HOWARD SERGEANT

From the woods, from hollows
of the whalebacked moors,
lovers crept in sleep
to the thigh-built towers,
to the pillows of the bride-
blown flame, where the time
was flesh, and the flesh
was world without land
in the endless foam
of the taking and giving,
and the end was always
the Word making love
in the tide and the ache
of the oyster, time:

—and heard not the wind nor the waters rising—

In the time of the oyster,
in the break of the tide,
the love making Word
is the way to one end
where the giving is taking,
and the taking believing
foam to be infinite
land without world,
curled in the magic
of flesh. But their sleep
is a crypt, and the towering
flame but a breath
of the leaf-riding death
from the woods and the moors.

"O THOU WEED THAT SMELL'ST SO LOVELY SWEET . . ."

EVELYN D. BANGAY

I have served hard to bring
My ground through tillage to fertility this Spring:
Sweated, got clogged of foot, to grow
Things that are needful to the health of men,
Of beauty in their growth and blossoming,
Preparing thus for what I held to sow.

I had worked long to find
The wherewithal to plant these acres of my mind:
Studied and sought, that they might be
Filled with the thoughts of poetry and friends,
Things that are holy, knowledgeable, kind,
And profitable under husbandry.

I am come out to know
What wealth of blade and fruit my deep-drilled furrows show.
There is no trace of all the seed
I laboured winter-through to set!
I see instead a strange exotic weed,
Strangling and sweet, choking what else would grow . . .
My feet—my hands—are caught in its green net!

A PICNIC IN SEPTEMBER

LUCY BREDIN

Unsleepy rivers, these, that rouse
Initiate joys!
Bathe in them, and the senses quaff
Bubble-music and melted light
And the chill of night on the bird that flies.
Mulled elixirs tell no lies;
These, though, make cold fishes laugh.

POEM

SAM HARRISON

Watching the window crawl across the ceiling
and travel down the yellow peeling wall,
sometimes I feel
I shall be lonely till the end of time—
as lonely as that visionary boy
who walks all night where mountain winds are wolves,
howling their hunger through set stony lips,
or where trees turn to heavy sponges spilling
rain over roses no-one wants to pick.

I see him strolling fog-enfolded streets
beside the harbour of some foreign town,
hearing the moan
of faithless melancholy sirens, sighing
for love no more returning from the sea,
the brilliant ship, the burning summer lost.
And I would bring him comfort—could I share
my sorrow with a shadow in the mirror
or with the window moving on the wall.

THE STRANGERS

JOSEPH JOEL KEITH
(CALIFORNIA)

One by one the hostess brought them in.
Strange how a room so bright
could show, alone, one little shaft of thin
and unrevealing light.

Strangers lied; polite, well-mannered bores
said nothing nicely; worse,
friends smiled through ennui's unillumined doors:
all drove home in their hearse.

TAKE CARE

CELIA RANDALL

Witchery has been here, passed down the cobbled streets,
Lurked in arched entries, dividing the light and the darkness,
Secreting, revealing, sowing inconsequent dreams
Along sensible highways. Beware! She is careless,
Incorrigibly heedless who reaps the crop of her folly!

Witchery has been here; her tremulous laughter
Sounded just now from that old twisted gable,
And behind that closed lattice there stirred for a moment
The glint of gold tresses.

There she is, you can see her, an old white-capped woman
Re-telling her beads in a doorway—the guise of a minute—
Round the next corner you'll find her again,
Red-lipped and alluring.
Take heed of her magic; she will change to a shadow
Tripping out of the sunlight,—to a white arm that quickly
Is seen as illusion.

Here, lit by enchantment, a wandering pathway
Leads to a grey-walled garden where scarlet cherries
Bunch into succulent mouthfuls. Look out! She has followed
Changed to a yellow-billed blackbird, side-cocking her head
Flinging her spells on the fruits till they fall,
Till they fall as white stones to the grasses.

Let us return to the safety of ledgers,
To the pendulous swing of machinery,
The unchanging urge of the cog and the piston.
Let us forget these wisps of gold hair,
These white arms checkered by shadow,
The gay chimerical cherries.
Let us be fooled no more by these other-world fancies,
Sip our last of the sorcerer's philtres,
Eschew the wand and the talisman, the lamp and the amulet
Live safely, conform to the world we belong to—
Only sometimes—

Only sometimes when you hear the sound of an opening casement,
And a peal of liquid provocative laughter,

See a door on the latch, and a beckoning finger,
Or a lantern leading through opening shadows,
Take stock and beware! There is something within you
Unextinguished, unstifled, that listens and watches.
There is something within you that listens and watches!

POEM

DANNIE ABSE

Was it like that with you also Noana,
every year the fear of November, the fire extinguished
in the cold sky and the wind biting the branches?
This red slow month haunts me with its leaves sinking
like dreams into the earth. Oh every year I fall away
from those I love, to keep company with the ghosts of November;
and did you also Noana, let your life drop drop into the jug
of November, scatter your splash of seed into your own wet earth
for metamorphosis? Oh the leaves of music that scrape
the pavements seeking a softer grave. Oh the restless
wind walking through brown fog with blue hands
against the fractured lampposts. There is a desert between
you and me Noana, a desert which is but the distance
between two hearts, two tears, and a forgotten
gesture. Ah November, look how your red mirror opens
up for me, the pharaohs of summer pursuing, and how
I have to stride into the cold and implacable glass.

How many more wastes of parting will overturn that jug,
each little loneliness filling it with drops of water,
or drops of blood that men call voices? How many more Novembers
before that jug turns over and the fluid souls slip, fall,
into the sand forever? Can we never obliterate
that desert, Noana, with lamps or kisses or children?
Is it always to be so that you and I must murder
and be murdered in November, sprawled against that awful enemy,
that red and slow and dying month.

REFLECTIONS AT THE SITE OF AN EXCAVATION

LORNA BRADE

Bones in the ground disposed, exposed in the fresh cut layer,
Once with a heart that beat in conquest or cruelty
Or fear too strange to remember so long after. The husky
Grass rustles and moves in the unmoving air; the long
And hollow call of the bird picking the sharpened doom
With merciless eye, picking, stealing the oracle's stock.
Movement and pulse and sense and the looming fear that today
Looms in a modish guise, the sign of man's preferment.
The vulgar and ruddy moon is out of fashion; the earth's
Shade on its face falls silent and passes; no beat of drums,
No regrettable commotion. Her deed's creature,
Well-used, outworn, mutters in vain incantations,
A Restoration relique. Our fear grows too diffuse
For this or that to have its meaning; rather the fear
That we need to fear, incompetent to know its object.
Maybe the ticker tape reports a sixteenth down,
Or the gossip column turns a phrase as it had not intended;
Which things signify? An obscure politician
Ten thousand miles away may give a clue, but small,
Small as a man's hand, dispersing in lines of vapour
Too thin for the sight to hold. But you, your ear to the ground,
Could differentiate the faintly hostile pulse
That rhythmed without sound or tide and set the sense alert.

O bones without flesh that left so great a heritage
To keep and multiply the race of men most lively
In sense and insight, how have we failed that keep
The sense and lose the insight, that know each fearful pulse
But lack its recognition! The horny porcupine,
Bristling with points that in such multitude close in
The tender flesh, knows more selectively the dangers
That encompass it. We shed the simple fears, the creak
Of bough, the stream disturbed, and in their garnered room
Come seven times seventy threats of worth unknown. We grope
And try. Discrimination grows too slowly; halts
In the accustomed spot, amazed at strange-dressed company,
Roystering hordes who may intend no ill, who knows?

To join the jollity is best; forget, forget.
Till the day come, the end, the slowly burning pyre,
The agony of heart that understanding brings,
Too late to save. Till when, O close the points
Against the importunate priest, lest his lenten ashes fall
On the head with a blessing; lest the bones cry out
"Memento, homo, quia . . . ," incomprehensibly strange,
"Reverteris." Alas,
Lest they cry out.

CAUTION TO TRAVELLERS

JOHN RAYMOND

That we may join in this, the long journey towards the garden
Winding by devious routes till we touch the healing circumference
Where thyme blows and the poppy glows emeshed in the orchard
And the olive trees stand in clusters.

Let us travel together and to make more speed, let us harden
Our hearts to the gleam of the pools and the echoes in the valley
Let us pass the shrines by lest we make a dilatory ending
And the satyr be there at the gate.

We must eschew all oracles, all augurs and men selling doves
The genial bonhominous Cyclops with his trencher of herbs and mutton
Secluded hermits' beckoning and the curve of the gull's flight eastward
We must pass the gold quarriers in the rock.

But above all we must fear the night, only travel by daylight
Or when there are plenty of stars: so shall we circumvent
The gibbering voices that moan among the oaks
Lacking the knife, the swift and healing incision.

Ribbons connect. Dim shapes in twilight gardens
Hasten to greet this sun that flames above the flower beds
Here are no parallel grooves or blind men's alleys
All roads converge at the entrance.

ON TWO MEMORIALS AT NOTTINGHAM CASTLE

WRENNE JARMAN

The same wild hour that bred you, Byron, bred
My grandsire too—Millhouse, the poet: the same
Ling-purpled Sherwood carpet knew your tread.
I see you both at twenty—as you came
Limping from Newstead and your 'Paphian girls'
To Neinton village; passing, at his door,
My grandsire brooding on the cheated poor.

He scowls at you—your silky chestnut curls,
Your pale and lunar beauty, all the young
Proud nonchalance of you; and does not know
His conflict need not be—to hate you so
For nobleness, and love your singing tongue.

All that is levelled, now you both are dust:
From that grey feudal terrace, you and he
Survey the shire in old fraternity,
And give and take in talk, as neighbours must,
He careful of your cankers, you of his.
—And I, knowing darker secrets lurk than this,
Could wish that by some wilful chance had flowed
In me one drop of your rebellious blood.

TURN OF THE YEAR

EDWARD TOEMAN

Come away
Where bright towers loom
In the blue grasses.

Where tranced lakes gleam
And lucid streams broil.

Where the minute fern uncoils
And the grasses riot.

Where the cathedral pine
Vanishes in glowing gloom.

Where heather joyfully stings
The plunger in the wilderness.

Where silence shouts more fruitfully
Than buried voices of tomes.

Come away
Where scaly birches leap
Where crowding leaves exult before
They tumble down and sleep.

AD INFINITUM

T. W. RAMSEY

Never seek to know your love,
  Love is instability,
Play it out in air upon
  The toppling cliffs of tragedy.

Those are pearls that were his day-dreams,
  Those but flints without a wound
That have gashed his wings of morning
  Where he lies without a sound.

All day on the barren beaches
  Sun-stiffened, blackened wings—
Such a meteor came to conquer
  Where the vulture shadow clings.

Meteor makes a fiery spindrift
  Strikes a match and all is done,
That was beautiful in darkness,
  This lies rotting in the sun.

LAMP OF THE AGES (To Lola Ridge)

WESTON McDANIEL
(NEW YORK)

Oh, she was flame bursting from core of heart,
Rose blooming red in garden of ice,
Hope white against the dark . . .
She was song threshing clouds with flail of wrath,
Dream arching skies with span of joy,
Thunder and rainbow out of the storm.

She was sun rising above hills of truth,
Setting over peaks of faith . . .
She was moon,
Star,
Lamp of the ages,
Torch to the night.

Oh, she was flame leaping from throat of fire,
The passion love,
The vision peace,
The hymnal—Man!

DAYDREAM

ANDREW TOD

I will run with silvery steps to the sea,
And grab at sovereigns in the mocking foam
And sigh my saddening sorrows to a hollow tree.
Insanity will wither through the brain and roam
In hollow caverns where the mind won't pierce,
And throw forth deep desires in darkening dust
Polluting the greenwaters, making fierce—
Calm channels. Turning gold to rust.

I will tie knots in glistening golden hair,
And scatter sunfed snowdrops to the wind,
And kiss the humble turf, and wear
A cloak of leopard skin, and find
A heap of boulders, bluff and bold
Leading downwards where the lights are green,
And in that darkening mist behold
Those guarded things which man has never seen.

ALEXANDRIA

JOHN HEATH-STUBBS

(i)

The ibises, those grave high-stepping birds,
Dear to the triple Hermes, snake-destroyers,
His messengers, who know the times and seasons,
The circling moon, the rising of the Dog-star,
And of the secret river-springs—these lead
That young-horned conqueror to the place
Where he should build, and with their broad white wings
Described the chosen acres, circling round
The flat alluvial soil
Which lay between the lake and the harbour-mole,
(With a small island in the harbour's mouth).

Dhu'l Kharnein, from white Macedon,
Who with his ordered phalanx overthrew
Magian Babylon and Ecbatana,
With upland Fars of the lion and the gold sun,
And dark-eyed Indians on Hydaspes bank—
Until he reached the borders of the world:
The dry unlimited plain
Full of hot dragons and of scudding ghosts,
And rumours of an apple-garden lost to man
(With Jamshid's treasure and his starry goblets)
And sentinelled by winged and flaming guards;
Or, northward, in the Caucasus he forged
The iron gates to keep back Gog and Magog
Until the day of doom that lets them loose;
Then he set up his throne,
Receiving the submission of the Ocean,
Whose fish-tailed monstrous gods as heralds blew
Their twisted shells, summoning the tribes of legend:
The satyrs, centaurs, and rough aegipans;
The white-flanked queen of the swift Amazons;
With dog-faced and intelligent
Baboon-men out of Abyssinia:—
He was this city's founder,
Who journeyed to the oasis in the west,
To seek his hidden father, the black Amun,

Whose stiff ram-headed image in the dark
Stepped forth to meet and greet him,
And took his hand in its dry wooden hand
(As, drunken once with sacred honey and wine,
Olympias in the cave at Samothrace,
Dim-lit by the spluttering pine-torch,
Half-swooning, felt the coiling snake about her . . .)
But here he dreamed upon the dark Egyptian earth
A city of white pillars and paved streets,
A market for all nations and their wisdom,
Where, violet-crowned,
The mountain-going Muses might descend,
To seek, well-pleased, their duly tended shrine.

(ii)

Ptolemaic Alexandria looked up at the stars,
And saw the planets circling in a wheel
Of mathematic order.
Rulers of fate, those starry gods were moved
Each in his sphere of crystal, trembling
In unheard harmony beneath the empyrean;
And, as in Babylon, the Zodiac rolled
Through the Great Year, a cylinder
Printing its arcane signs of destiny
Upon the world below. There to the market
Came traders from all quarters of the earth,
To cheat and haggle in that vast bazaar. King Ptolemy
Passed on a day of festival, attired
As Dionysos, gilded ivy in his hair,
Followed by Maenads and by flute-players,
Men masked as beasts, or reeling-drunk Sileni.
And here the poet
Lamented for the thymy-fragrant hillsides
Of Sicily, and the brown shepherd-boys,
Herd-girls with Doric voices like wood-pigeons,
Gathered for harvest-home . . .
But also landed
One day, in that harbour, where from its island
The towering Pharos shed abroad its light
To all the wandering ships, one who had been
Born of rich parents in an Indian town,
Mud-walled, with golden roofs—and the great mountains
Lifting to heaven their eternal heads
Rose up beyond it. Around it was the jungle,

Noisy with monkeys and the shrill hard peacock,
Enclosing secret pools where the golden tiger
Came lordly down to drink,
And paths which only the quiet slow elephants trod,
Moving to their assemblies, or dying places.
But he had learned the doctrine
Of Prince Siddhartha, the Illuminated
Lord of Compassion, a king's son,
Who taught under the leafy terebinth,
The tree of the world, among whose branches nestled
The gods like singing-birds, clustering to hear
The words of liberation. So this man left
His native town, and all his goods, and westward went,
Clothing himself with death—the yellow robe
Snatched from a dead man in a road-side graveyard—
A nameless monk, to Alexandria.
He stood, and spoke his message:
"There is an endless wheel of recurrence—
Of birth, and death, and being born again;
None can escape old age, disease, and being born,
Save by this liberation. For the compassionate ones,
The innumerable Buddhas, like stars, like suns
To all the numberless universes
In the great circling plan of Space and Time,
Pause, at the very threshold of extinction
With passionless faces, and then, in a last gesture
Of infinite tenderness, stretch out their hands
To all who seek them. They bring them forth
Through purgatory worlds, and paradises
Of diamond, coral, pearls, and lotus-flowers—
Endless illusions—
Until at last they find their peace, burned out
In one still, glittering point.
This life is not so real as we think—
The broken image of the moonlight floating
Upon lake-water which a light breeze troubles . . ."
Then all the wise men, the philosophers in Alexandria,
Lifted their hands in assent, the pointing finger
Towards the One, beyond the sky's appearance.
"For had we not learned" they said "that beneath the changeable moon,
Tyche, the bright-haired daughter of chaos, is mistress,
As on her silver wheel she turns our fates;
Where Heraclitus, saw all things flowing, and Plato, our master,
Taught us we are continually born and re-born
In a shifting shadow-play, in a Magian cave of illusion."

(iii)

But Mark, the lion, came roaring out of Galilee,
With a message from Peter, a violent gospel—
Telling of Christ's anger in Jerusalem,
That city which should have no holy stone
Left on another . . . And he told
Of a Tree which was not of illumination,
But the centre of darkness over all the earth;
Of a Saviour ascending there
To win the terrible resurrection of the flesh.
And so where Theocritus lamented in megalopolis,
Some, at the lion's hot breath,
Turned, in a strike against the city; they seceded from civilisation,
Because of their passion refusing participation,
And learned an askesis of the flesh in the heart's desert.
They were in the wilderness, and
(As once their Lord also) with the wild beasts.
Where haunt the jackal, the jerboa, and the desert bustard,
Christian hermits, blackened in flesh, existed,
And made inhuman the body's image; self-exiled among the dunes,
They inhabited a country of poltergeists,
Who whirled them all at once up into the hot air;
And howling djinns, who travel in the twisting dust-storms

About their curious business; afrits, whose form
Is a mask only, an empty simulacrum;
And the sad ghouls, who lurk, with the hyaena—
The human-laughing, brindled, coward beast—
In the forgotten graveyards of dead kings.
And there, too, they encountered
The banished gods, whose footsteps may not seek
The green-fringed banks and the canals of Nile:
The red-headed murderous Set, the onagar,
Toeris, the hippopotamus, Sonchus, the crocodile,
And those who gibbered like apes, yapped like dogs,
Crawled like the beetle, skipped like the wet frog—
Procession of nightmare, which the holy Antony
Saw pass before him through the quivering air,
Like misformed clouds, blotting the single sun.

(iv)

Hypatia, the daughter of Theon, the mathematical
And eloquent virgin, spoke, recounting
The properties of cone and circle, divine geometry,
The austere signs over the door of wisdom;

And of that hidden harmony Pythagoras—
He of the golden, sacred thigh—discovered
Dividing the taut string of a *tromba marina*—
Congruous with the order of the circling heavens—
The seven sirens of fatality, conducting
The wheeling dance of bright alchemical stars.
But always with her wise uplifted finger
She turned men to the One, and the words that Plato
Reported of Socrates: how he reclined
In a meadow of Ilussus, by the small city of Athens,
And spoke to Phaedrus of the nature of Love.
To him the Muses' dew-drunken holy cicadas
Chirped in a chorus from among the poplars.

Hypatia mounted her chariot; the bright and polished wheels
Moved through the Brucheion. Then, all of a sudden,
The open square was full of forms of menace—
Naked emaciated limbs thrust out
From fluttering rags, bare feet over the pavement,
Grim pale mouths set in sun-blackened faces,
And shining, shaven heads of the wild monks.
Black Egypt of the desert is returned to the City,
Howling against the prefect Orestes and the heathen Hypatia,
His friend, the Greek woman in her white wool and linen.
Her chariot is stopped; they pull her down; they drag her
To the Caesarium. They strip her; her virgin flesh
Is hacked and knacked by oyster-shells. Her blood
Is slippery upon the floor of the church.

Hypatia fell. She was lifted. She became Catherine,
A holy virgin in a bright dazzle of legend,
Hand-fasted to Christ, standing among the stars,
Our Fortune, in the firmament, still with the toothed wheel,
That would have hacked her and knacked her;
Propitious to scholars (and to wheelwrights).
Philosopher, and martyr to the tyrant Maximin,
Confuting all false doctrine of Greece or the wide Orient,
Her wheel is broken
By the strong descending Messenger of her election.

Catherine fell. Angels lifted her. They bore her body
(As Sleep and Death, once, the war-fallen Sarpedon)
Eastwards to Sinai, the primal mountain of Law.
There guardians received her, a holy household of monks;
They buried her in secret. And from the bones
An exudation of violets, a strange oil of healing.

The views expressed in the following articles, reviews and correspondence are not necessarily those of the editor.

Music and Poetry of the English Renaissance, by Bruce Pattison (Methuen, 18s.); *Soviet Writers Reply,* Introduced by J. B. Priestley (S.C.R., 2s.); *Poems of Alice Meynell* (Hollis & Carter, 12s. 6d.); *Santiago,* by Elizabeth Belloc (Macmillan, 6s.); *Sea Glimmer,* by William Jeffery (William Maclellan, 6s.); *The Swinging Lantern,* by Wilfred H. Bartlett (Williams & Norgate, 2s. 6d.); *Verses in Exile,* by Michael Blair (Evelyn Blair, 5s.); *The Hill and Far Away,* by Norma E. Smith (The Author, Halifax, N.S.); *The Greenwood Anthology of New Verse,* Compiled by Herbert Palmer (Fredk. Muller, 7s. 6d.).

REVIEWED BY WILLIAM KEAN SEYMOUR

Of the books I have before me the two first on the list seem to provide a basis for consideration of the rest, for they treat of two things—literature as art and literature as life. Mr. Bruce Pattison's *Music and Poetry of the English Renaissance* deals exhaustively with the very heart and reason and first principle of poetry, which is *song* and therefore an adornment and expression of the human spirit. In *Soviet Writers Reply* the conception of "pure literature", the treatment of what Mr. Priestley calls "men's private worlds of love and hate, hope and despair", is denounced as being out of step with the modern world, even as "reactionary". We have had a full experience in this country of the argument as it concerns poetry during the past four decades. It has not yet been and, I think, never will be resolved; but unless literature in Britain is to be drilled and regimented it is safe to say that much remains to be written, both in prose and verse, in a spirit of pure detachment from the political, economic and social life of our time. But let me take Mr. Pattison's book first. It is a detailed and scholarly analysis of the relationship of music and poetry in that richest period of the English lyric bounded by the late sixteenth and early seventeenth centuries, when the two arts were wedded to a degree not seen before or since.

The poets of the Elizabethan Age were familiar with music as an essential element in everyday life. And not only the poets: the gentlemen, the soldiers, the courtiers, the gallants and dandies; the matrons, court ladies and maids—even Elizabeth herself, dexterous on the virginals as Henry VIII was before her on the lute. Kings and noblemen maintained their companies of singers and musicians as parts of the natural amenities of civilized life. Between 1590 and 1620 forty volumes of madrigals were printed—*and these were of course for use in the home.* It was "a singing age," as

one of Fletcher's characters said. Street-hawkers and artisans had their chants and rhymes, and in the taverns "noises of musitians", pipers and fiddlers and singers, wooed the pence of the patrons.

It would have been strange if the poets had stood apart from this conspiracy of melody. Minstrels and *scops* had been the disseminators of popular song from time out of mind, and now, with popular rhymes taking on the "utility" dress of ditties and love-plaints the "new look" of madrigals, the poets—professional and amateur—came into their own; England was a nest of singing-birds. The continental influences began to come in as the medieval "rakehell rout of ragged rhymers" went out. Ronsard, Petrarch influenced Spenser and Sidney and they in turn a host of rhyming enthusiasts. Poets and composers co-operated as never before or, alas, since. That this gave form, clarity and euphony to verse is certain; but there was the disadvantage sometimes of the lines being measured and stopped and compressed unnaturally—like a Victorian woman's waist or a Chinese girl's foot. A study of Mr. Pattison's chapter upon musical influence in poetry will remind the reader of this element of forced correspondence to the musician's air in much of Elizabethan lyric verse. It may make for lilting charm, but it makes, too, for stilted artificiality when we consider the verse purely as verse. But, leaving that aside, what treasure of simple spontaneous poetry came to life under the influence, direct or implicit, of music! Jonson, Campion, Donne, Davies, Herrick, and after them George Herbert, all grew a lovely awareness of verbal melody in this general atmosphere of social music.

My own prime conception of poetry is of a medium which, in its basic difference from prose in spirit and in form, shall sing its way memorably into the hearts and minds and souls of men. It may celebrate or depict or interpret passions and emotions, actions and scenes, ideas and systems within or infinitely beyond the scope and range of the poets of the English Renaissance; it may be private art or of the public concern, but in the large flexible sense to be poetry it must be *song,* that elusive and magic ingredient of language which the ages have given us as a heritage.

The Soviet writers who have replied to questions put to them by representative British writers (through the agency of the Society for Cultural Relations between the Peoples of the British Commonwealth and the U.S.S.R.) all manifest a deadly seriousness of communal purpose which is the literary antithesis of "pure literature" or what used to be called "art for art's sake." They see themselves as soldiers, fighting their way to the future through tremendous obstacles; practitioners of "genuine, militant and conquering art," each and everyone "a particle of the Soviet system," loving that system and furthering it in his writing with the passion of an ideal. They see themselves as builders of a new society, subordinating and conditioning their private art to a public and national system which they hope in time will be accepted by the world. Mr. Priestley's introduction to this little book could not be saner. He sweeps aside the objection to the

"propaganda stuff" of "ventriloquial dummies" and recommends these Russian writers as "earnest men and women of integrity"; but, he says, they go too far, in theory if not in actual practice, "in their acceptance of literature as a social document and in their harsh criticism of any writing that concerns itself chiefly with the private emotions." I agree, but I share his gratitude to the writers on both sides of the Iron Curtain who are contriving to exchange ideas about the Living Word. If in this country we are thankful that our poets and writers do not as a profession conform to the tenets of a political directorate of opinion we can none the less examine without prejudice the testimony of Russian colleagues of the pen. It is interesting, for example, to hear from Mr. Nikolai Tikhonov that in Soviet poetry, and particularly Russian poetry (the difference in description is to be noted) noticeable advances have been made towards simplification and clarification, involving "bringing the language of poetry closer to the expressions and intonations of ordinary speech." The trouble with clarifying and simplifying poetry for the million is that the process—as in "controlled inflation"—may get out of hand and result in versified journalese.

That a private art can be a public good is exemplified in *The Poems of Alice Meynell,* edited by Sir Francis Meynell and beautifully printed by the Chiswick Press. She surely was the dedicated singer, constantly conscious of "fresh songs", of "happy songs", of finding "a more mysterious lyre." In her earliest poems she was at one with music, and in her most quoted sonnet, "Renouncement", she muses upon "the sweetest passage of a song". That was the artist in her, causing her consciously to wear her singing robes and sweep her imaginary lyre. It is a method that later, less lyrical poets have discontinued as outworn and repetitive, but to Alice Meynell as to Swinburne and Dante Gabriel Rossetti it was a mainspring, wound to produce her loveliest effects of music-burdened thought:

> "I run, I run, I am gathered to thy heart."
> "My songs foregone against my face and hair."
> "And mixed with memories not my own
> The sweet streams throng into my breast."
> "The dumb gale struck it on the darkened hill."

Her poems show a contradictory personality, in part tremulous, exquisitely sensitive to the sensuous world of soft appearances, and in part austere, aloof, withdrawn, "mourning the crippled world", craving for her "delicate mind a casque". Of influences the two most apparent to me are those of Christina Rossetti and Francis Thompson. Like them, she was paramountly a Christian poet, but her mysticism runs less deep, and her art and her emotion are more controlled. In the later years of her life she was made so aware from appreciators of her scrupulous artistry that she rubbed and refined her verse to an almost invalid pallor. But, taking this

whole collection, we may well be thankful that her reputation has been rescued from the short measure of the anthologies.

Another woman poet who derives her chief inspiration from the Christian religion is Miss Elizabeth Belloc. Her new book, *Santiago*, is slender enough (although it contains the work of an earlier collection) but it confirms the frugal artistry of one who does not rush into rhyme but waits patiently for the compelling moment. There is nothing experimental in her manner, which clings for the most part to octosyllabics irregularly rhymed, and even triolets are not disdained; but what she has to say she says simply and with the passion of an inborn lyricism. From "The Skier" I quote:

"In the high fields of the snow
I said: Golden Rose of the World,
How can I seek and find thee?
But the winged spirits of God
Cry: How, how canst thou know?
We are flying before and behind thee.
Rush forward and go.
The heart of the Rose was taken
And its holy shrine forsaken
Thousands of years ago."

One of the Soviet writers in the pamphlet I have mentioned claimed that the poet must speak first of and to his own nation; only thus can he address the world. "Every writer is, first and foremost, the son of his people. A writer outside of time and space is a mere abstraction." Certainly a nationalist fervour is to be found in *Sea Glimmer*, a posthumous volume of some of the latter poems of the Scottish poet William Jeffery. The book was prepared for the press before his death, and I can imagine the joy this poet felt in communicating to others his delight in the Scottish scene—the straths, moors, mountains and lochs which to him were the immense yet transient shapes of reality to be transmuted into symbols of his soul's experience. His verse aspires to the grand manner; nothing scamped, truncated or blurted. What he saw and felt he worked upon lovingly and with zest:

"But mostly to the visiting eye of contemplation
A rich harvest may be gleaned from our forest—
Pines of strength, armoured with the antiquity of eagles,
Roarers in the storm, and in the calms
The abode of golden-plumaged and responsive peace . . ."

And, as with Hugh Macdiarmid and other latter-day Scottish poets, William Jeffery was given at times to writing in dialect. Although the Southern mind may find Scots vernacular poems somewhat like Burns with a difference there is no question of the rude strength of lines like these from the title poem:

"Sair gruppit by the flesh, and wraxed wi' thocht
That canna in this birlin mappamound
Mak sense o' stern and flouret, I was brocht
By chance or flichter o' a birdis sound
Intil the faem-reach o' a muckle sea
Where mews and gannets danced in lichtsome round,
Wi' mony a dip and bound,
And tongues o' ilka wave liglagged wi' me."

William Jeffery had a wide and generous poetic equipment and Scotland suffers a great loss in his passing.

So, too, does England by the recent death at the age of thirty-four of Wilfred H. Bartlett, one of the most gifted contributors to *The Poetry Review*. His was a natural well-spring of song in forms simple and unpretentious and it is a tragic thought that the little book under notice, *The Swinging Lantern,* is his first and maybe his last collection. These poems have in them an elegiac note as though he felt the dews of mortality upon him: they mourn for the dead in the war, for the Calvaries of daily life, for the little furred things slaughtered at the reaping, for the grief of forsaken birds, and even (so sensitive was his apprehension) for the leaf torn by the wind:

"A torn leaf, cauldroned in the breeze,
Down-feathering with fitful speed
Finds, in a rapture of heart-ease,
Green silence in the mead.
So my dear bond with earth will break;
But, Lord, I wonder, shall I find
As little change as this green flake,
When death comes like the wind."

I do not know from what or to which scenes Mr. Michael Blair has been exiled, for in *Verses in Exile* he gives no clue. His lines have in them much worn currency, and even when he is most evidently sincere he fails somehow through naivete of expression to get the old tokens into healthy circulation. Thus in "Passion" he writes:

"If in this farewell my heart should break,
And tears of unrequited love descend
Softly on my hot impassioned cheek,
Like autumn leaves, crisp with frost,
Wrinkled, sunburnt, laden with the dew,
Fall in the plash of summer's death . . ."

and we are left to sort out the images. I like Mr. Blair better when he is out to be frankly earthy and entertaining:

"Madame Pompadour
Just bubbled with allure,
She smelled just like roses
Cultivated in manure . . ."

I welcome the very satisfying new collection of poems by Norma E. Smith, *The Hill and Far Away*. The author is in charge of one of the outposts of the Poetry Society, being President of the Nova Scotia Centre, and this comment of mine is in the nature of a return greeting. She is a various and accomplished poet with a predominantly lyrical impulse; acutely aware of nature and of all the smooth sufficient things of earth. But she is aware of more than life's agreeable appearances: the suffering of humanity evokes intense reactions in her mind, as in the noble poem "The Four Christs."

The last book on my list but of particular importance to readers of *The Poetry Review* is *The Greenwood Anthology of New Verse*, compiled by Mr. Herbert Palmer from a thousand entries judged by him in the "Greenwood Prize" Competition of 1943 held under the auspices of the Poetry Society. Mr. Palmer's eminence in contemporary poetry and criticism makes this collection particularly significant and reading this anthology we may rest satisfied that the broad stream of English poetry is flowing strongly. There are many poems here that I could happily dwell upon, but that would be invidious where each and all have proven merit; but the collection is one that I wholeheartedly recommend to all interested in poetry and future Greenwood awards.

Sir Gawayne and the Green Knight (Eyre & Spottiswoode, 9/-), done into modern English by Kenneth Hare (2nd. ed.).

REVIEWED BY T. A. AGIUS

We should be grateful that English Poetry is not "for export only". This gem of medieval verse, colourful as a Limoges enamel, has been so skilfully rendered into modern verse that its colours still glow and burn. Moreover, Kenneth Hare's smooth Spenserian stanzas retain so much of the music of the original that we easily fancy the narrator accompanying himself on a harp. Even when read in a crowded Underground train, the poem has interest and magic enough—experto crede—to create a silent environment.

No better introduction to medieval poetry could be desired, for *Sir Gawayne* avoids the tediousness and boorishness of many of the old legends (after all, they were composed to wile long hours away), and retails a vivid portrayal of XIV century life. Certain scenes, the hunt for example, recall Homer, and challenge comparison in any literature.

In the very able Introduction, R. M. Wilson rather shies at the usual assumption of French authorship. Certainly French and English elements are mingled: the verse, the character of Sir Gawayne himself (unimpeachable in the English tradition: faithless in the French), the intermingling

of action (which the English loved, and still do!) and the love-theme (the French preference), so that an author well acquainted with French literature is indicated. But much learning and industry have only complicated this unsolved question. As to locality, once past the Wirral, the only topographical hint is that of mountainous country, Scotland rather than the Fells.

Kenneth Hare has caught the mind and spirit of medieval poetry, and given us some very lovely lines of his own. For example, here is a complete picture:

"They greet the unsought sleep with heavy eyes,
And leave the hall to shadows and a fire that dies."

Here is a line which recalls Francis Thompson's, "I said to Dawn, Be sudden! And to Eve, Be soon!"

"Then at the word of God the morning woke."

and a whole moral theme and a psychological study in one line:

"I were not less a coward though none should tell."

Then, utter loneliness,

"And there was none but God to talk with by the way."

Lovely, too, is the Pageant of the Year (pp. 27-8). And quite remarkable, and very faithfully rendered are the "detailed" passages, the armour, the breaking of the deer, and the bleak winter countryside, rotting steel and leather, a subject untouched by the Morte D'Arthur. Less detailed, but as accurate and "photographic" of contemporary living are the descriptions of customs and conventions on a high social scale. Indeed, a film on the lines of *Henry V* could easily be constructed from the poem, and even so, might leave a less vivid impression than the original.

The modern verse is admirably clear, but some nuances of expression from the old version have crept in, which an ordinary reader might fail to follow, e.g. every deal (everich del), perdy (Par Dieu) and so on. And some slight note on the religious background would help the general public (for this poem is not a collector's piece, but a national treasure, e.g. on early and mid-morning Mass, shriving, crossing, the custom of painting the "Gracious Queen" inside the shield (as Arthur did), devotion to the Five Wounds (the Banner of the Pilgrimage of Grace). Such notes could be added without making a text-book of it.

A point arises as to the length of the Christmas holydays. Universal custom prolonged them to the Epiphany, Twelfth Night (as the English Court did at Eltham Palace).

But the poem gives "fifteen days" on p. 16, and three days, ending with the feast of St John on p. 39 and 40. A query for commentators.

Grammarians may note the combined thee and you usage (still prevalent in Somerset, where a six-year-old child was heard to say suddenly to her sister: "Not thee thou I"). But, for any reader, this story, well built to its climax, and the march and music of the verses remain a possession of price and sure anodyne of life's disappointments.

Choral Speaking—Speech Fellowship Booklet, by Clive Sansom. *The Art of Good Speech*, by Dorothy Birch (Hutchinson).

REVIEWED BY ROBERTA SHUTTLEWORTH

In the interpretation of lyrics that express universal emotion, choral speaking can be of great value because its effect seems to suggest the collective voice of humanity in unison of thought. It is also of great value in epic interpretation—ballads, etc., and the present revival is the modern application of a medium as old as recorded speech. It is of importance to speaker and writer and its effect in Drama—demonstrated by Mr. T. S. Eliot and others—can be as powerful as in the Greek Tragedies.

Mr. Sansom expresses in his booklet the interpretive, creative and psychological aspects of this art. His achievement in this field is well known and any students interested in this aspect of speech work would be well advised to peruse what he has written. Choral interpretation proves of great psychological value to shy natures as it provides an outlet for feelings which their own vocabularies could not epitomise and their self-conscious reserve could not release in solo work. This consideration makes the subject of special interest to teachers in schools.

The Art of Good Speech is a comprehensive treatise dealing clearly and concisely with many aspects of this important subject. The work is distinguished by an admirable balance between technique and artistry and a realisation that good speech is of psychological, artistic and utilitarian significance and is both creative and interpretive.

Though this book is of widespread appeal it should prove of particular value to all who are interested in public speaking, drama and verse speaking and as a refresher to teachers and examination students.

The author is convinced that mastery of words and their enunciation leads to emotional stability of character and gives a creative outlet to energy that might otherwise express itself in destructiveness. She approaches technique as a means to this freedom of expression—"self-confidence tempered by humility."

The nature of rhythm is artistically treated and it is to be regretted that there is no clarification of the psychological effect of metrical variety—the subtle and often sub-conscious suggestion of mood and meaning technically known as truncation, feminine ending, inversion or substitution of feet, and so on.

The important subject of resonance is well defined but suffers from a somewhat ineffectual approach to the importance of the part played by the head sinuses in tone-production.

The book includes some helpful paragraphs on choral speaking with an appendage of passages suitable for this treatment, but I disagree with the suggestion that the sonnet is a suitable subject for this medium. It is true that it frequently expresses universal emotion but I feel the "mental drama" in this form is strictly individual.

The King of Asine and Other Poems. By George Seferis. With an Introduction by Rex Warner. (John Lehmann, 7s. 6d.)

REVIEWED BY DEREK PATMORE

British admirers of Greece are apt to think of this country as a land filled with ancient monuments and a place where the people still live in the shadow of a glorious past. They are ignorant of the achievements of the modern Greeks and know all too little about contemporary Greek art and poetry. Yet in the brief period of some hundred and twenty years —since the days of the War of Greek Independence, the Greeks have created an art and poetry of their own which is now worthy to take its place beside the best schools of the Occident. Athens, today, can boast of a great modern painter in Niko Ghika and its modern school of poets headed by Angelos Sikellianos, George Seferis, and Elytis, is beginning to win recognition and respect all over the world. Moreover, these Greek artists and poets are in the great Greek tradition. As Rex Warner remarks wisely in his excellent introduction to this volume: "The distinction between the "ancient" and the "modern" Greeks is positively harmful, since it disguises the most obvious facts that the ancient Greeks were modern and that the modern Greeks are ancients." What makes contemporary Greek poetry so remarkable is the fact that it is continuing a tradition begun three thousand years ago, and that it draws much of its strength and inspiration from the classic Ancient Greek literature. No modern Greek poet illustrates this synthesis between ancient and modern Greek culture better than George Seferis and so the publication in English of his poems is an important literary event.

George Seferis is haunted by his Greek ancestry. Although he uses modern forms and technique and is well-versed in all the contemporary schools of modern poetry—he has translated T. S. Eliot into Greek—his poems are always evoking the glories and tragedies of past Greek history. Take the title poem "The King of Asine":

> "All morning round and round the castle we were searching
> Beginning from the shadowy side where the sea
> Green without reflection—breast of the slain peacock—
> Accepted us like time, with never a gap in it.
> Veins of rock came downward from on high,
> Twisted vines and naked, many branched, reliving
> At the touch of water, which followed by the eye
> Tried to escape the tiresome cradle-swinging,
> Losing its strength by small degrees.
>
> From the sunny side a long beach wide open
> And the light splashing jewels on the great walls,

No living things about, the wild doves have gone,
And the King of Asine whom we had searched for these two years
Unknown, forgotten by all, even by Homer.
Only one word in the Iliad and that uncertain,
Dropped here like the gold sepulchral mask:
You tapped it once—remember the echo? Hollow in the light
Like a dry jar in the dug earth,
And the same echo in the sea with our oars;
The King of Asine a void now under the mask,
Always with us, always with us, underneath a name."

At the same time, Seferis is a citizen of Europe as well as a Greek. Like T. S. Eliot, whom he admires so much, he is obsessed by the evils confronting the modern world. A diplomat by career as well as a poet, he has travelled a great deal and the fact that he was born in the then Greek city of Smyrna in 1900 has given him an international point of view. Rex Warner quotes a speech which Seferis made on April 6, 1941, the day of the German onslaught on Greece in which he said: "We know now that there is a new order in Europe. We know its meaning. We know that it means the assassination of the weak; it means the employment of the basest forms of lying to carry out these murders; it means the systematic extermination of small nations." These words are typical of this poet who hates all forms of tyranny and who is a liberal by temperament.

The poetry of Seferis, which has already exercised a considerable influence on the younger Greek generation, is complex and highly intellectual. It is tinged with pessimism and melancholy. The troubles and sufferings through which his people have passed have caused this poet great personal anguish. As Warner says: "Perhaps it was this experience which accounts for that element, so prominent in his work, of the sheer agony of being and feeling oneself to be a Greek—brilliant, fearless, energetic, with nerves taut for action, but, like Orestes, pursued by furies." This sense of stress is found in poems like "Mycenae," from which I quote this passage:

"These stones.

I know they know not, although
I have often followed
The path from killer to victim
From victim to vengeance
From vengeance to another crime
Feeling my way
Over the exhausted purple
That night of homecoming

When the Furies started whistling
In the grass
I have seen snakes coupled with vipers
Woven over the fated generation,
Our destiny."

Seferis published his first book of poems *The Turning Point* in 1931. The volume caused a great stir in Athens and the old poet. Palamas, who was one of the founders of modern Greek poetry declared that Seferis's poems were the beginning of a new movement in Greek literature. Another volume of verse *Mythistorema* followed in 1935. A further volume *Gymnopedia* appeared in 1936, and in this year he also published his translations of T. S. Eliot together with a commentary. The title poem in this volume under review first appeared in 1939 but in presenting Seferis to the British public the publisher and translators have selected poems from the whole body of his work.

It is not easy to translate Greek into English but the three translators, Bernard Spencer, Nanos Valaoritis, and Lawrence Durrell, all poets themselves, have done their work extremely well, and the publisher John Lehmann is to be congratulated on the fine format which he has given the whole book. Indeed, this publication of George Seferis's poems in English is symptomatic of the traditional bonds that link Great Britain and Greece, and it is pleasant to see young English poets helping to make the works of one of Greece's foremost poets known to their own countrymen. The young Greek poet, Nanos Valaoritis, is now domiciled in this country and he has already done valiant work in helping to make known to British poetry lovers the works of his fellow Greek poets. For apart from translating some of the Seferis poems, he has also done some fine translations of another remarkable Greek poet, Elytis. Indeed, it is to be hoped that Mr. John Lehmann will follow this volume with another devoted to translations of Elytis.

Meanwhile, I am sure that this eminent Greek poet whom I first met in Cairo when he was a member of the Greek Government and then again in Athens when he was *chef de cabinet* to the Regent, and whom I admired and liked for his gentle courtesy, charm and erudition will be happy about this beautifully produced English edition of his poems. For Seferis, who has lived and worked in this country, has long been open in his admiration for contemporary English letters.

Ten One-Act Plays from the North compiled by Winifred Bannister (William McLellan & Co., Ltd., Glasgow, 8/6).

The Dark Tower by Louis Macneice (Faber, 6/-).

REVIEWED BY JEAN KENWARD

Here is a most rare volume. Actors and audience alike will be grateful to Winifred Bannister for her remarkable discrimination in achieving a collection wherein not one play is tinged with artificiality, sentimentality or sophistication.

Small casts, frugal stage settings and simple costume combine to make this anthology valuable to the amateur as to the professional. There is in each short, vigorous drama a strange, slightly fey quality, hospitable to the public, fascinating to the casual reader.

The Carlin Moth, by Robert Maclellan, is brilliant. First produced by the B.B.C. on May 6th, 1946, with a cast of four, it contains some of the finest Scots poetry of our age. Except for the dialect, are not the following lines reminiscent in their gentle imagery of Geoffrey Chaucer's "Canterbury Tales"?

She was as fair a lass as ony rose,
In aa her weys as dentie as a deer,
And whan she promised she wad be my bride
Gin I said nocht in ony mortal ear
I took her to my breist and gart her bide,
I couldna thole to pairt wi sic a prize.

Sean O'Casey's *The End of the Beginning*—sudden, startling, and apoplectic—repays a good company with a good laugh. What a master of modern wit is here with his debonair backchat, his dashing repartee, occasionally rollicking in the lewd but submitting to vulgarity never! A play upon the theme of the old rhyme:

There was an old man who lived in a wood
As you may plainly see.
He said he could do as much work in a day
As his wife could do in three.
"With all my heart", the old woman said,
"If that you will allow,
Tomorrow you'll stay at home in my stead
And I'll go drive the plough."

Also included in this volume are: *Mary Frobisher,* by F. Sladen-Smith, a satire, but to my mind a slightly self-conscious one; *A Gover'-ment Job,* by Winifred Bannister, quick, jovial mystery with many tense moments it runs at a great speed, and ends with spontaneity and aplomb; *The Man from the Fells,* by Peter Standring; *Dog in the Manger,* by W. Templeton Law; *The Counsellor,* by Jack Loudan; *Old Music,* by Neil M. Gunn; *The Failure,* by Joe Currie and *Interlude,* by Paul Vincent Carroll.

Altogether an extremely satisfying anthology and one to be recommended.

Listeners to the Third Programme will be especially interested in the book of broadcast plays by Louis MacNeice. In a general introduction the author debates upon the values of visual and non-visual drama, enlarges upon the art of script-writing for the radio, and generously discusses his own experiences in broadcasting. He proves to himself and to his readers that the wireless *can* be worth listening to and that it affords fascinating scope to those writers who are wise enough to calculate the possibilities of their medium.

Those who have enjoyed Mr. MacNeice's vigorous programmes from time to time will appreciate the care with which he points the way to those who would emulate him.

Here is a playwright of quite another temper to those listed above. One must be astute indeed to follow his leaping mind—a mind in action not unlike that of the March Hare whom in his most wily venture he portrays.

The Dark Tower is a visionary drama described by the author as "a parable play belonging to that wide class of writings which includes 'Everyman', 'The Faerie Queene' and 'The Pilgrim's Progress'." As such it is in its nature allegorical. It rests with the reader to uncover a meaning and a purpose supremely applicable to twentieth-century Man.

From such an extract as this may be gained an idea of the moral theme running throughout:

"*Roland*: And that means I'll fight the Dragon?
Tutor: Yes—but let me tell you:
We call it the Dragon for short, it is a nameless force
Hard to define—for no one who has seen it
Apart from those who have seen its handiwork,
Has returned to give an account of it.
All that we know is there is something there
Which makes The Dark Tower dark and is the source
Of evil through the world. It is immortal
But men must try to kill it—and keep on trying
So long as we would be human."

The remaining works in this volume include a broadcast portrait of Anton Tchehov; a dramatized Russian Folk Story; and The March Hare Saga—a superb piece of nonsense reminiscent of Lewis Carroll; the dialogue crisp and brief, the argument concerning "the clash between the poetic (and sympathetic) madness of the Hare and the pedestrian (and repellent) madness of everyone else." Mockery wholesale and with relish.

But with Mr. MacNeice we can be certain that beneath the ridicule lies some vital message. As he writes in his Introductory Note to *The March Hare*; "unthinking gusto, I must confess, is something I have never aimed at." What he *does* aim at is our pleasure to discover.

The Dedicated Life in Poetry and *The Correspondence of Laurent de Cayeux*, by Patrice de la Tour du Pin. Translated by G. S. Fraser. With an Introduction by Stephen Spender. Harvil Press. 7/6.

REVIEWED BY JOHN WALLER

I have never held any sympathy for those poetic ringmasters who from time to time issue their orders with a crack of the critical whip or with an air of God from the burning cloud as to how poetry should or should not be written. And it is usual for posterity to strip them of their ringmaster's uniform, leaving them in the naked and silly posture of the clown. These people are always our enemy and it is interesting to-day to observe how the language of those who opposed Auden in the 'thirties is almost identical with that of *The Quarterly Review* on Keats, an early and famous instance of where the sword turned out to be of lath. I am sorry therefore to find Nicholas Moore in a recent number of *Poetry London* attacking a poet—among other more justifiable reasons—for the purely pedantic cause that he leaves out the definite article. There is nothing wrong in saying "hand on heart" and many people with an ear would consider that it sounds preferable to "hand on *the* heart"; similarly, in the lines of Henry Treece:

"This is the end of all things, end of time
And end of all the mind's green escapades"

anyone with an ear would judge that—apart from such exigencies as rhyme and metre—the "the" before the first "end" is quite sufficient if a technical flatness is to be avoided. My point is that it is surely the duty of a critic to *judge* and *estimate* poetry, not to *dictate* the terms on which it should be written or the rules of technique to be applied. But Geoffrey Grigson is a more striking example of a modern poet who is sometimes one of our most reactionary dictatorial critics. In his "Polemic" article on Dylan Thomas he even attacked that poet—so far as I recollect—for failing to rhyme and scan and for having had his first work published in *The Sunday Referee*. At one time it was the Editor of *New Verse* who led the party of freedom from pedantry—and on the question of early appearance it is surely preferable to make a bow in the open market of a Sunday newspaper than in the closed pages of one's *own* magazine under the pseudonym of Martin Boldero? However, I make these remarks with sorrow rather than with malice, for both Nicholas Moore and Geoffrey Grigson (at least in his early "Several Observations") have written poetry that I have enjoyed. Alas, it is almost with Grigson as if some Georgian poet on his deathbed had hurled at him the effective dying curse: "One day you will be more reactionary and pedantic than any of us!" So his attack on Dylan Thomas is like a tank aiming to crush a buttercup; the tank goes roaring over the cliff into the sea leaving the buttercup smiling and unscathed, for the tractors have come nowhere near it . . .

In view of the above it is with suspicion that I approach a work on poetical metaphysics written by a French poet, who as a Roman Catholic might be expected to lay down hard and fast rules delivered with all the semblance of authority of a papal bull. I am truly tired of poetic mandarins. To such, however, M. Patrice de la Tour du Pin does not aspire. His work is significantly entitled "The Dedicated life *in* Poetry"—not as some English critics might have written it "The Dedicated Life *of* Poetry." It is perhaps the most gentle work of its kind that I have read and it is only to be regretted that the publishers have not—as the *Times Literary Supplement* has suggested—undertaken the publication in English of the entire "Une Somme de Poésie" rather than of this small volume which is an extract from Book IV of the larger work followed by a piece from Book VI. The few pages now admirably translated by G. S. Fraser not only whet the appetite for more but leave also an uneasy feeling that the author has not perhaps been enabled to state his philosophy in all its completeness.

So far from La Tour du Pin being another poetic mandarin, his problem is rather (as Stephen Spender points out in a foreword) that of being a poet, of living a poetic experience. Form as such comes after. Do not, he would urge, make any rules about form; "it is the opposite course which is wiser; to construct your order after allowing the living impulse the greatest liberty." Only in this way can a set of songs be "moving, organic, radiating."

The life of Tess, which is the name he uses for his college of singers, is therefore one of freedom. (Physically it is modelled on his family seat, the Chateau of Le-Bignon-Mirabeau, seventy miles from Paris). It is not a closed house, but protected by houses round about that are open to the outside world. It is also a life that is lived largely within the person. La Tour du Pin does not of course urge that all poets should live with him at Bignon or in similar mansion; each singer must study from what physical environment or behaviour he receives most joy. Happiness is a proper end. Meanwhile the life of Tess is lived spiritually and in the heart, until the inner life of solitude and the outer life of communion become harmonious, converging, and fusing. For "our basis is not poetry, our basis is man; we are not seeking to know poetry but to know man." That is to say that the poet, who is inevitably a solitary, must not through this risk losing his foothold on earth. "Far from men what would become of the song, *what significance is there in seeking adventures in the so-called plane of pure art, except for the sake of acquiring certain technical resources*?" The italics are mine. And then later: "Poetic forms are already such extremely fragile things that we have to struggle with all our poor human strength to stop them rolling down the slope that descends towards death." Forms and abstract art must always be the servants and never the masters of the "Dedicated Life," that life which I may if I choose live in cafes and public houses as well as in mansions or libraries or on prairies, with companions

who are gay or who amuse me as well as with intellectuals, and making conversation which will not necessarily be on the forms of art of philosophy or on the technical comparision of one writer with another. For whatever the choice, Tess, while restoring and exalting what is essential in past ages, must attach itself firmly to "time as it now passes, with its variations, its humours, its enthusiasms and its tragedy."

La Tour du Pin is not of course urging licence when he calls for freedom. "I wish to appeal," he says, "to the freedom which bursts through time, and not to the liberty which trails at time's heels." The singer enjoys full freedom in his life—for there are no rules—but he must know himself as a preliminary to knowing others, that from his own solitude he may move towards the solitude of others whom he loves or who may attract him "for whatever reason, secret or obvious." His freedom is in fact the freedom of humanism enlarged from the pedantry of the schools and flavoured by a personal, a kind of renaissance joy. Lives as well as poems should be composed not according to any pre-stated set of abstract rules but from the real and complicated nature of the individual himself. A further quotation makes this clear: "You bring a poem into being not merely for its own sake; but for your sake, a world animated by you . . . Whatever you have shaped, you will have made this particular use of these particular hours of a human life, you will have interlaced these inner motions for a human purpose, and you will have given just that particular hue to your eternity; yet beware of distorting your poem because of fears or anxieties about the moral opinions of others."

In Tess finally nothing must be excluded, "nothing in life should be completely detached from poetry." This does not apply to such posturing concepts as the fatherland, civilisation, ideals of justice and fraternity, all false foundations stirring men's minds most violently to their destructions, but more to Sidney's phrase "Look in thy heart and write" to which La Tour du Pin would add: "The world enters into the heart, and in the world first those who are beloved." Thus the great poets, Shakespeare in his sonnets to the Dark Lady and to Mr. W. H., Milton in "Lycidas," Donne in his love poems, Villon in his "Testament," even the Greek poet, Cavafy, with his laments to dead boys, Lanis, Iasis, Marylos Cleitos, or Myris of Alexandria, all realized that each life of another person, whether a lover or a friend, a drinking companion or a mistress, was a new stage on which the poet moved. Such also is La Tour du Pin's knowledge. But the choice of these lives is the poet's own—they are as free to him as the right to be himself, whether gay, dull, virtuous, athletic, family-loving, learned, theatrical or ascetic. "Seek within your most intimate freedom." Do not be afraid to expose thus in public your inner life, even if this brings suffering. And La Tour du Pin ends: "There are many problems that I cannot foresee, many seducers whom we must not be afraid of encountering. You have the whole earth to scour for the nourishment of your song."

I may seem in writing of "The Dedicated Life" to have dealt with it overmuch from the sensuous, the emotional approach, but it has seemed to me a warm book, not to be treated with the chill aesthetics of those who endeavour to reduce everything of the kind to a system of cold intellectual analysis. I am supported too in the author's words: "If everything is not based upon love we shall lose ourselves more and more in purely imaginary subtleties and endless games with ideas . . . We must set the circuit of understanding solidly upon the circuits of love." He has early urged us to secure a balance, but above all not to get caught in the cold, to seek not a cold joy. And this is the evil in the centre that must be outflanked. "Preserve your irony in order to combat a certain over-seriousness, preserve your over-seriousness in order to put certain delights in their place, preserve a sense of sensual delight to reclaim your intellect when it becomes too cold. Be rich in the spirit, this is the price of renunciation." Because Tess was founded on the idea of creation, on the creative function of each member of the community, the cold intellectual is always an enemy. And while it is true that Patrice de la Tour du Pin has before him a supernatural object which is unattainable because man must always be prepared to look forward from and beyond any achievable goal to which his impulses give the clue, he would appear an apostle of Naturalness, which by my definition has always stood for freedom from form, whether in life or poetry, a hatred of the abstract, and a sense of humanism expressed in knowledge, understanding and love.

THE HID BATTLEMENTS

BY

DALLAS KENMARE

PART III

Coventry Patmore (born 1823) was a friend of Alice Meynell, and a mystical poet of a unique kind, his main concern being with the theme of mystical love—the mystical element in erotic love—and ' nuptial mysticism'. Although he was thus preoccupied with one of the greatest of themes, he never became a great poet, though he was often an exquisite one. His conception of marriage was profoundly sacramental; he saw it as the earthly symbol of the union between God and the soul, and fortunately his own experience amply justified his ideal. His married life is described as "exquisitely happy", and when his wife died she was enshrined in his memory as "the personification of all that was loveliest in life". She was indeed a brilliant and beautiful being and the centre of a

famous group of writers and painters, including Tennyson, Carlyle, Ruskin and Millais, who painted her portrait, while Browning wrote the portrait in his poem called "A Face". Patmore's life-long concern with the theme of the "unknown Eros", the vision of a love at once human and divine, and the conception of the true purpose and meaning of human love was embodied in the long poem called "The Unknown Eros", and specifically in the lines:

> What rumour'd heavens are these
> Which not a poet sings,
> O, unknown Eros? What this breeze
> Of sudden wings
> Speeding at far returns of time from interstellar space
> To fan my very face
> And gone as fleet
> Through delicatest ether feathering soft their solitary beat,
> With ne'er a plume dropp'd, nor any trace
> To speak of whence they came, or whither they depart?
> And why this palpitating heart,
> This blind and unrelated joy? . . .

"Not Amor", but, if not, what God, indeed? He was writing of mysteries the human race has scarcely even glimpsed as yet. It was indeed because he was essentially a mystic, with a profound and prophetic conception of love, that he often wrote, in both poetry and prose, of what was to some quite unintelligible, to others wholly unacceptable, and even dangerous—for he was dealing in dangerous matter. Gerard Manley Hopkins realised this only too well when he urged him to burn his work called *Sponsa Dei*, saying, "That's telling secrets", or, alternatively, to show it to his spiritual director. But this, Patmore, although a devout Catholic convert, was unable to do: he was too deeply convinced of his own insight into the mysteries of which he wrote, and preferred to destroy the manuscript rather than submit it to someone who, as likely as not, would fail to understand the true nature of the work he was engaged on.

It was round about the time Patmore died (1896) that T. S. Eliot was born—yet another writer destined to carry on the great tradition of religious poets, in addition to revolutionising the whole state of English poetry for good or ill (or both!) Certainly his influence on the young poets of the 1930s and late 1920s was far-reaching and profound. But no doubt it will be realised, when enough time has passed to assess his influence adequately, that his greatest contribution lay in maintaining the great religious tradition in an age when for the most part religious values were tragically discounted. His technical innovations are really already of comparatively little interest, and scarcely more important than the theories of Wordsworth and Coleridge expounded in the Preface to the *Lyrical Ballads*. What remains, always, is the content, not the form, of poetry, and it is

notorious that the ideas which create the greatest disturbance, the technical innovations and metrical oddities, prove no more than a nine days' wonder. Wordsworth is not remembered for his theories on poetic diction; certainly Coleridge is not, either, nor will T. S. Eliot be. When a few more "generations have trod, have trod, have trod", people will be reading with gratitude and heart-lifting joy the words of the great chorus from "The Rock":

> O Light Invisible, we praise Thee!
> Too bright for mortal vision.
> O greater Light, we praise Thee for the less:
> The eastern light our spires touch at morning,
> The light that slants upon our western doors at evening,
> The twilight over stagnant pools at batflight,
> Moon light and star light, owl and moth light,
> Glow-worm light on a grassblade.
> O Light Invisible, we worship Thee!

The contemporary scene is commonly considered fairly bereft of spirituality, and to a large extent the assumption is only too true, as the tragic events of the last ten years abundantly prove, yet always, in every era, however disastrous, there are prophetic voices, temporarily drowned, certainly, by the yelling of the masses, but these mature voices survive the centuries long after the noisy adolescents are virtually forgotten, and would probably be forgotten altogether but for the records kept within the pages of the history-books. The obvious outer history of the world and the inner spiritual history of man's development seem to remain, as with the individual, on two irreconcilable planes, but eventually it will be proved beyond all doubt that though the thought of Plato and Plotinus, the lives of Jesus and of Buddha, appear to have been no remedy for a sick world, that indeed the disease of humanity is more virulent than ever, the answer lies in our inadequate conception of time. A thousand ages in the sight of God are, as the well-known hymn reminds us, "like an evening gone", and we are impatient. Against the background of the eternal, what is the sum of two thousand years? Moreover, the Voice of God is the "still small voice", as Elijah discovered. One of the characters in Christopher Morley's novel *Thunder on the Left* asked: "Why is kindness always whispered, while anger is so loud?" Love always whispers; it is hate that shouts. Which explains why our present age of noise is essentially symbolic of the evils now everywhere manifest. Where, as D. H. Lawrence asked, are "the quiet oblivious places where the angels used to alight?" No wonder the world rushes wildly and with a great blare of loudspeakers from one calamity to another.

But there are voices prophesying, not "doom" but release, and the dawning, though still distant, of an era of true freedom, far removed from the hollow freedoms proclaimed in current ideologies. Perhaps the purest

of these voices is that of Morwenna Donnelly, whose lovely poem "Beauty for Ashes" gained for her the John Llewellyn Rhys Prize for 1943. At the end of that exquisite pæan, written in a city of destruction during the years of destruction, she writes:

> And I went to the window gathering the new light
> Upon my face, for it seemed in the dawn streaming
> In the clouds of light that I saw pinnacles and towers
> Of a far-off city, and a river in sleep, and spirits
> With their hands linked, floating in embrace and shining;
> And the light that was in the early sky touched
> The city beneath, my own, that death had ploughed,
> With its burned spires, and places desolated and bleak,
> But I saw in the furrow, luminously waiting, the seed
> Of a new visionary perfection, a Phoenix
> Of the spirit, rising out of the ashes.

The whole poem is inspired with purest mystical feeling, radiant, too, with the spirit of pure Poetry; but it is too rich in beauty to hope to do justice to it by quotation; the whole must be read and received in reverence and joy.

Others there are, too, who may one day be assessed as mystical poets; the judgment of posterity inevitably differs widely from contemporary verdicts. W. J. Turner, for example, is often referred to as a "metaphysical" poet, yet he is one of the purest of pure poets, and, sometimes, deeply mystical too:

> Moving perpetually, with faces bright
> Massed Swedenborgian angels, missal-bound
> Orbed like small suns of self-creating light
> Converging from dark corners of God's mind . . .

There is surely a considerable future for the reputation of Turner, who at present remains a poet very inadequately acclaimed. And David Gascoyne, who in his 1937-1942 volume of poems produced some notable verse of a clearly mystical nature, as for example in the poem "Lachrymae":

> Slow are the years of light:
> and more immense
> Than the imagination. And the years return
> Until the Unity is filled. And heavy are
> The lengths of Time with the slow weight of tears,
> Since Thou didst weep, on a remote hill-side
> Beneath the olive-trees, fires of unnumbered stars
> Have burnt the years away, until we see them now:
> Since Thou didst weep, as many tears
> Have flowed like hourglass sand.

In "A Solemn Meditation" and "Hymns to the Noumenon", two of the finest poems in *A Trophy in Arms* which won the Hawthornden Prize for 1937, Ruth Pitter certainly touches remarkable depths of mystical thought:

> To love the Lion I will dare;
> He waves in heaven his flames of hair:
> Comet of beauty, through each limb
> The entire being informeth him:
> He could crush my every bone,
> Yet this is but phenomenon.
> My secret spirit sees him all,
> Through the rent veil, the crumbling wall.
> In joy this great archangel old
> My glorious God, and I, behold.

Finally we come to J. Redwood Anderson who won the Greenwood Prize for 1944 with a poem on the same theme as Browning's "The Strange Experiences of Karshish", called simply "Lazarus". It is a wonderful reconstruction of the Gospel scene:

> Suddenly I heard a voice, shattering the darkness,
> splitting the silence as an axe cleaves a tree:
> *Lazarus, come forth!* and immediately powerful hands
> —O, not of men!—lifted me. I seemed to float
> On a miraculous current of air, till gently I stood
> erect, felt under the soles of my feet firm earth,
> and on my face the strange heat of the sun.

But perhaps his most notable achievement is the sequence of poems called "Triptych," consisting of "Approach", "The Fugue of Time" and "An Ascent", profoundly mystical in content and treatment. "Approach" deals with the approach of the soul to God; "The Fugue of Time" is an "imaginative presentation of the World-process," and "An Ascent" repeats the subject of "Approach", but in the form of spiritual biography. This is great mystical poetry and an amazing and surpassingly difficult project, triumphantly achieved. A stanza from "The Fugue of Time", from the section sub-titled "The Divine Dialectic" is a fitting confirmation of the belief that far from being dead in this age of spiritual dereliction, English mystical poetry is vividly alive:

> And suddenly
> annihilation is swept away!
> Life's Nay is changed into Life's Yea!
> Heaven and earth
> now reappear, charged with eternal worth
> and perfect meanings none till then had known:

he sees Me now, no longer in naked loneliness,
but sees me robed in the world's multitudinous dress
and knows, at last, I am indeed the world:
I am this storm of divine music hurled
—surge of the stars, roar of the galaxies—
for ever through time, my changing consciousness.
And he in Me is nothing made—and yet,
in Me, no less, is he made infinite:
I take his tears and make of them
the lovely garlands of My choice
and of his joys
the shining of My diadem:
I bear him on in My enormous sweep
into the unwalled future that I create—
whether he wake, whether he sleep,
whether he laugh, whether he weep,
my love embosoms him, My splendour is his fate.

SOME NOTES ON AMERICAN POETRY

BY

G. S. FRASER

PART II

Richard Eberhart, a contemporary of Empson's at Cambridge, is not very like Empson in flavour, but has a quality that one can recognise Empson as also having: a mixture of intellectual precision and rather fierce, concentrated feeling, a way, too, of expressing that feeling in a rather curt, held back, down-to-earth fashion. In poems written during the war he shows an ability to visualise and to think, in the sort of situation that more generally produces a confused outburst of mere feeling:

Anti-aircraft seen at a certain distance
On a steely blue night say a mile away
Flowers on the air absolutely dream-like,
The vision has no relation to the reality.

In another poem he manages, what is very difficult, to express without mawkishness or toughness something that is difficult to express—a something, indeed, that is embarrassing even to name, I can only call it "manly sorrow":

Of Van Wettering I speak, and Averill,
Names on a list, whose faces I do not recall
But they are gone to early death, who late in school
Distinguished the feed belt lever from the belt
holding pawl.

Howard Nemerov, a younger poet, is consciously and obviously in the manner of Empson. The following verses are from a poem subtitled "Meditation from Empson." It is a metaphysical poem in the best sense combining neatly two mutually relevant subjects, the philosophic view of space and the fighter pilot's experience of it:

The universe of course is infinite,
Said Epicurus, throwing a javelin
Off from the outer edges of assumption:
For if the spear rebound there's more outside
And more outside if it go on in flight.

Repeat the experiment at every stage,
He said; but lacked the energy of proof.
He thought that reason was for mind enough,
He concluded there; he was no drudge:
I doubt he ever would have reached the edge.

Dunstan Thompson, a much more lush and febrile poet, is the one who takes after Mr. Barker (Thompson, Mr. Barker complains in a recent witty review, has been "breathing down the back of his neck"). Here are snatches,

All friends, all suicides, the enamoured dead
With violets from their eyes, and in their hair
Forget-me-nots, are gilded romantics . . .
This loneliness for you is like the wound
That keeps the soldier patient in his bed . . .

Exaggeration of sensation shows
The poet loves a person not a poem.
So you, my dangerous darling, my delight
And doom, are like the tomb tricks Merlin knows . . .

The expensiveness, the softness of much American life is what Thompson brings out, and this is brought out, too, but with a harder, a more destructive technique, by William Abrahams, writing about a summer resort in South Florida,

Across the bay, the beach, like a screeching peacock,
Preens its redundant feathers. Aviary of the aimless,
The too successful: Ambition's last garden, Egyptian
Without dignity. Industrialist pharaohs fondle
Their cleopatran matrons, grown paunchy and tan,
Become yachtsmen, contemplatives, dwellers on islands.

There, if one can see Mr. Barker's influence in such verbal clashes as "cleopatran matrons," one can see Auden's in the last line. Yet though Mr. Abrahams attacks, he is also attracted to, this blossoming, hothouse life.

> Autumn, for Julian, was a sapphire in the hand,
> A gift from a schoolboy friend who played at verse.
> He turned the sapphire in his plump white hand,
> Admiring the blue against the white, so cool . . .

We are not meant to like Julian (we are meant to be pretty repelled by his "plump white hand"), but nevertheless Mr. Abrahams still feels a certain fascination with "the Henry James country," as he calls it: he has not got to the stage of saying, "Oh, the hell with it!" In a lot of American poetry one can feel that the poet is, in a way that would embarrass us, asserting his exclusiveness, his *chic,* that he is surrounding himself with bright cultural objects like the furnishings in American whisky advertisements: this is what Mr. Barker means by asserting that there is, in much American poetry, a flavour of the *nouveau riche.* Not in all: next door to Dunstan Thompson, in the volume from which I am taking most of these quotations, I find an unknown John Thomson, who writes in this nice, simple pleasant way:

> See the little maunderer,
> Stretch out on the grass!
> His heart is burst asunder
> The pieces cry Alas.
>
> Upright, fat pink pieces
> Of fluffy cloud overhead.
> The little facets of his eyes
> Split by salty tears, so tired
>
> Of seeing pieces of the world,
> Close, and rustling grass,
> Caws of an old unpleasant bird
> Are sounds that say Alas;

That sort of simplicity, in the tradition of the folk poem, is, however, pretty rare. Perhaps the most promising of the younger American poets are those who are most obstinately intellectual. I have not read enough of the poets I am going to quote to say much about them. The poems I have read of Marguerite Young's, for instance, are all about Berkeleyan idealism:

> That apple was mental, a constellation of ideas.
>
> Can a real thing, invisible, be coloration of
> Mental, and inaudible a sound of congruent harpers harping?
>
> Eve ate an apple, a sweetness or sourness, a roundness, a redness
> Subsisted as no experience of fact
> But marriage of Eve with space . . .

For in truth there is no substratum of dead fact,
We are not dependent from the blowing trees—

Only finite souls and God alone exist, I trust,
No swan that soars above collective intellect . . .

The tone of these last two couplets suggests Yeats: perhaps Yeats's late interest in Berkeley is Miss Young's determining influence, or perhaps she majored in eighteenth-century metaphysics: it is always hard, harder than with ourselves, to know just where American poets start from. They tend to get back, however, to a real world: like Randall Jarrell, a soldier, meditating near a university, in rather flat verse, but verse with moral weight,

In our zone ignorance is born in banks
And cultured colonies the rich have sown:
The one is spared here what the many share
To write the histories that others are.
The oak escapes the storm that broke the reeds,
They read here; they read, too, of reeds,
Of storms; and are, almost, sublime
In their read ignorance of everything.

Kenneth Rexroth, again, in a long poem, which perhaps as a whole is a failure (too much cluttered with illusions and indigestibly condensed philosophising), struggles towards an adequate statement of the moral position of man in our time:

Men drop dead in the ancient rubbish
Of the Acropolis, scholars fall
Into self-dug graves, Jews are smashed
Like heroic vermin in the Polish winter.
This is my fault, the horrible term
Of weakness, evasion, indulgence,
The total of my petty fault—
No other man's.

This intellectuality fights, in all these three quotations, against art. A poet like Dunstan Thompson is smoother and richer, because he says very little, than poets like these who struggle, awkwardly, to say a good deal. But thought is the skeleton of poetry and, without that skeleton, the flesh grows puffy and slab. The older American poets can be read for instruction and pleasure, the younger, like these three I have quoted, mainly for instruction; yet such young, uncomfortable poets are at work on a necessary task, defining the intellectual and moral attitude of the mature American, in a period that has laid terrible responsibilities on his shoulders. We should read American poetry, for it is our best clue, perhaps our only clue, to what is going on in the difficult, scrupulous depths —at the moment, the very uncomfortable depths—of the mature American mind.

THE POET IN THE ENGLISH THEATRE

BY

E. MARTIN BROWNE

What is the theatre for? What do we go there to receive? A more vivid reproduction of life? The joy of watching accomplished human beings doing well the ordinary things—walking, eating, kissing, dying—which we ordinary people do in a less intriguing fashion? Yes, all that: and our Entertainment Industry has built up a body of actors whose skill and dexterity can supply it supremely well. But periodically that industry shows us something more—the skill of the actor and producer carried beyond themselves to give us a deeper kind of satisfaction, the essential experience of theatre—a work of art. A play, that is, which adds to technical skill (without which no artist can create satisfactorily) those qualities which turn a representation of a slice of life into a presentation of the whole of life. Imagination that makes us see all heaven in a flower, bliss in our brows' bent, makes us aware of the consequences of our own acts to the end of time, and of the struggle of a single man as the battle of all humanity with Fate. The pulsation of these mighty forces in the sound of the play's words: their significance given to its deeds. The wings of thought lifting us up to be as Gods, so that even while we suffer with the mad old man in the storm, we see his plight in its divine perspective. Or the laughter which issues, not from us ridiculing the stupidities of some other human being, but from all men, ourselves among them, convulsed at our own follies, of which those that set us laughing are but a microcosm.

Now these qualities are the qualities of the poet: and it is true to say that without the poetic qualities the theatre cannot long exist. As they wane, it sinks into mere representation, or into banality where the mind is not engaged, or into spectacle which ultimately becomes brutal or licentious. The history of the theatre has seen plenty of such declensions—from Greece to Rome, for instance, or from the Elizabethan dramas to the "blood-pot" of the late Victorian era.

Some have thought that the theatre could be rescued from these depths by mind alone, that dramatised discussion could fill the vacuum. This aridity was never what the public wanted, even that part of it which could think. It is not the theatre's purpose "Every speech should be as fully flavoured as a nut or apple", says Synge: every speech, that is, must have its delight within itself, not as a contribution to a discussion. The delight must be in its own sound, in its aptness to the character speaking, in its unexpectedness, as human nature is infinitely unexpected. The experience given by the whole play must not be to the mind alone, but to the spirit also, an imaginative experience.

The poet, then, is the necessary re-creator of the drama, the man whose words are winged and whose vision if fresh and large. The theatre turns back to him for these things whenever it is sick. The revival which has given us the present hopeful state of things was made chiefly by two men with the souls of poets, Ibsen and Shaw. Both were men of abounding imagination, who were never confined within the littleness of their scene, but broke out of it continually into fantasy and brought into the individual lives of their characters the impact of universal forces. From them a lively theatre has learnt to explore the world of mind and spirit once more.

Yet you may say, these two are not in fact poets. Ibsen called himself one, but his most famous work is his most unpoetic. Shaw has wit and brilliance, audacity mixed with wisdom, and an unexampled vocabulary, but the one thing he is *not* is a poet. Their legacy to their followers is definitely not that of the poet: they have bred that very drama of discussion that we reckoned just now to be one of the antitheses of poetry. Whatever poetic gifts they may have had, these two men both surrendered them to their desire to preach a gospel and to the needs of the theatre that they wrote for and into which the public must be brought.

There is of course a good deal of truth in this view, especially as to Shaw, and he is the best illustration of what happened in our theatre to the poetic impulse. When the theatres were closed in 1642, an abrupt end was put to a dramatic tradition which, deriving from the Church, had always been popular, and of which the recognised speech was verse. During the period after the Restoration, the theatre became more and more a place of ephemeral entertainment, first for the Court, later for the new Middle Class, and always in its simpler form for the populace. The division between classes grew stronger, and the universal appeal of the theatre weakened: with it went the universal approach of its dramatists, who now set out solely to please their immediate audience. Poetry became a thing apart and "serious": compare *Hamlet* or *Macbeth* with *Paradise Lost,* and reckon that there is not three-quarters of a century between them. Already in the Restoration theatre tragedy has become grandiose: to our ears stilted, to its hearers a thing remote from their lives as men: Dryden, or that fine play *Oroonoko,* are stately but cold examples. These alone are the dramatists who employ *verse*: everything else is written in prose.

This divorce becomes steadily greater as years go on, till in Victorian times we have, on the one hand, the practising men of the theatre who write prose dialogue of no literary value and the crudest imaginative content, and on the other the practising poets, giants in their own art yet completely ignorant of the theatre in which their forbears practised it. The "plays" of Tennyson and Browning are almost all unactable. Why?

Three reasons may be given. First, the ignorance of theatrical craft. Only he who is in the theatre knows the way in which the sleeping words on the dramatist's page are waked to life: the theatrical craft of actor and

producer by which the audience is induced to believe the character real and to accept as his fresh-minted thoughts the lines written months or years before by another person. A good dramatist knows enough of this process, by experience and by intuition, to go through it imaginatively in writing, and by doing so, to leave sleeping on his page the life of the character. But if he does not do so, the words will be dead and no character can arise from them. So it was with much of the writing of those eminent poets to whom the theatre was an alien world.

A further difficulty lay in the "nobleness" considered essential to a poetic theme. The lesson of Shakespeare was forgotten. Hamlet's characteristic adjective is 'noble', but he is not noble all the time, and there comes into his play many characters noble neither in birth nor in thought, so that the whole gamut of life is played there. Shakespeare knows as well, and loves as tenderly, the most despicable as the noblest: he saves the ruffian Abhorson from execution because he cannot bear to part with him, and relishes the Porter or the Clown as deeply as he does Macbeth or Cleopatra. Drama cannot be written by anyone who is not willing to associate on equal terms with all men: shall I say, who does not follow out the Incarnational view of man, in which every soul is equally God's because He is Himself Man.

Third, and most interesting of all, perhaps, is the particular difficulty of the poet's diction, especially as regards his verse-form. Shakespeare worked in what we call "blank-verse", and all his life he was making that already flexible form capable of more and more variety. Here is his verse in 1594:

> If then true lovers have been ever crossed
> It stands as an edict in destiny.
> Then let us teach our trial patience,
> Because it is a customary cross
> As due to love as thoughts and dreams and sighs,
> Wishes and fear, poor fancy's followers.

And here it is in 1609:

> O see, my women,
> The crown o' the earth doth melt. My lord!
> Now withered is the garland of the war.
> The soldier's pole is fallen! Young boys and girls
> Are level now with men: the odds is gone
> And there is nothing left remarkable
> Beneath the visiting moon.

You see how much more complex it has become. But after the Restoration the opposite process began: as lyric and epic poetry gained in importance at the expense of the dramatic, verse forms became more and more severe and less adaptable to the needs of characterisation. By Tennyson's day one feels that no human being can speak in this rigid

measure: but already in Dryden's version of Antony's death one notices the dulling effect:

> I have not loved a Roman, not to know
> What should become a wife; his wife, my Charmion!
> For 'tis to that high title I aspire;
> And now I'll not die less . . .

It is partly that the Latin system of versifying by counting syllables and by long and short vowels, has been imposed upon English, a language founded on stress-value. And it is also that the *speaking* of the lines has become so rare that they are now regarded rather as *literature,* to be *read.*

In our own century, poets, like all artists, have been sifting their traditions and trying to find the foundations of poetry, so that for a very much changed world poetry may be truly created anew. Much iconoclasm has gone on, and there has been a dangerous tendency to cliques, but we can now see more than the beginnings of a twentieth-century poetry, which is both real poetry and really of our time. Its foundations, if an inexpert critic may be so bold as to define them, are the natural stress-rhythms of English and the current speech of our day. Even if poetry is for a time made bare or harsh thereby, the poetic imagery of the old tradition must be surrendered as outworn coin, and the blank-verse form and its derivatives must be transmuted into a looser rhythm-structure—sometimes so loose as rather to be a *search* for structure—till a new certainty begins to shape itself.

The poets from T. S. Eliot onwards who have begun this search have been anxious to get back into contact with the theatre. Here was a place in which poetry could be spoken, not read: in which it could be what it basically is and originally was, a direct means of communication between an inspired singer and the people to whom he belonged. They have sought to re-enter the theatre; but it has not been easy.

The theatre engaged in entertainment had no use for them. They wanted to bring speech back into its pre-eminent place, but the audience was unaccustomed to listening. They wanted to take the risks of imagination, but the audience was satisfied with a slice of life. They didn't know the theatre-craftsman's job the way he knew it—and anyhow they wanted that way changed.

Their entry, therefore, was roundabout: through the radio and through the Church. The Church, rightly divining that dramatic poetry should start once more where it first began, set up some landmarks. John Masefield's "The Coming of Christ" with Holst's music in Canterbury Cathedral (1928), was one. Gordon Bottomley, who had long and successfully pioneered poetic drama with amateurs and to whose craftsmanship we all owe a great debt, wrote "The Acts of St. Peter" for Exeter Cathedral (1933). T. S. Eliot created a pageant-play "The Rock", on church-building in 1934, and that led to his writing "Murder in the Cathedral" for Canterbury in 1935.

This play has proved to be the beginning of a new growth in our theatre. It is not, of course, a theatre play. It was written for a mediæval Chapter House, and is in some ways closely allied to church ritual and the mediæval Mystery Plays. But it is the work of a man who has both studied the essential workings of the theatre and sifted the traditional methods of poetry: a great poet of our own age who understands drama from the inside.

The play, is of course, limited: it is held down by the inactive Chorus of Greek poetic drama, uttering "in great swaths"; its characters are symbols rather than people: but it does succeed in making its subject universal through imagination, in making a 700-year-old story immediate to a modern audience, and in using poetry for the purpose. The Chorus may have no part in the action, but it brings the whole of woman's life to the stage.

Seven years we have lived quietly,
Succeeded in avoiding notice,
Living and partly living.
There have been oppression and luxury,
There have been poverty and licence,
There has been minor injustice,
Yet we have gone on living.
Living and partly living.
Sometimes the corn has failed us,
Sometimes the harvest is good,
One year is a year of rain,
Another a year of dryness,
One year the apples are abundant,
Another year the plums are lacking.
Yet we have gone on living,
Living and partly living.
We have kept the feasts, heard the masses,
We have brewed beer and cyder,
Gathered wood against the winter,
Talked at the corner of the fire,
Talked at the corner of streets,
Talked not always in whispers,
Living and partly living.
We have seen births, deaths and marriages,
We have had various scandals,
We have been afflicted with taxes,
We have had laughter and gossip,
Several girls have disappeared
Unaccountably, and some not able to.
We have all had our private terrors,
Our particular shadows, our secret fears.

It expresses, too, the deepest fears and hopes of the human spirit.

And it gives both background and contrast to the drama of action: the interior action of Becket's personal struggle towards a martyrdom which shall be "the design of God", and the exterior action of the murder, done by ordinary men, some stupid, some wily, some wicked, who try to excuse their deed in specious and amazing explanatory speeches, which yet are also frightening because they and their hearers are tragically aware of the doom that lies upon them:

> Go, weak sad men, lost erring souls,
> homeless in earth or heaven.
> Go where the sunset reddens the last grey rock
> Of Brittany, or the Gates of Hercules.
> Go venture shipwreck on the sullen coasts
> Where blackamoors make captive Christian men;
> Go to the northern seas confined with ice
> Where the dead breath makes numb the hand,
> makes dull the brain;
> Find an oasis in the desert sun,
> Go seek alliance with the heathen Saracen,
> To share his filthy rites, and try to snatch
> Forgetfulness in his libidinous courts,
> Oblivion in the fountain by the date-tree;
> Or sit and bite your nails in Aquitaine.
> In the small circle of pain within the skull
> You still shall tramp and tread one endless round
> Of thought, to justify your action to yourselves,
> Weaving a fiction which unravels as you weave,
> Pacing forever in the hell of make-believe
> Which never is belief.

These are the accents of a new and true dramatic poetry and they have given to thousands the authentic experience offered to his own contemporaries by Shakespeare. But their author will not return to anything akin to the classical style. He is concerned rather to advance, and to tackle the much more difficult problem of a play in a contemporary setting. For this he must find a verse-form which, while not cramping poetic expression, springs naturally from our contemporary speech-rhythms and accepts our idioms. He must adopt the setting and characters usual on the contemporary stage, so that the audience starts from what is familiar in its imaginative journey.

The first—and it is intended to be only the first—of Mr. Eliot's essays in contemporary drama is "The Family Reunion". Written in 1937-8, it was produced in 1939 under the shadow of war, and only succeeded on the stage when revived last year. It takes as plot the story of Orestes, and his pursuit, first by, and then of, the Eumenides: but it sets this Greek story in a modern English country house, with Amy, the dowager Lady

Monchensey, as the Clytemnestra, her son Harry as the Orestes and his aunt Agatha as the Electra. It also reinterprets the Greek story so completely that Harry's passage through the accursed wilderness of sin, his own and his family's has new life as its end: A door that opens at the end of a corridor. Sunlight and singing.

Agatha tells him that:

> It is possible
> You are the consciousness of your unhappy family,
> Its bird sent flying through the purgatorial flame.
> Indeed it is possible. You may learn hereafter,
> Moving alone through flames of ice, chosen
> To resolve the enchantment under which we suffer.

And at the end it is indeed his privilege to have "crossed the frontier beyond which danger and safety have a different meaning"—the frontier which at this moment lies between us all and the new kind of life which we know can alone save us. Harry only begins to know what lies there, and he cannot explain what he knows, so the play seems to some inconclusive. Mr. Eliot himself has likened it to the Choëphorae, which is the *middle* play of Aeschylus' trilogy on Orestes: and we can see clearly enough that at this moment no one could write the final play. Mr. Eliot dramatises the search, and shows us that at least there *is* a world beyond the frontier of material values.

The material values are represented by Amy and by two uncles and two aunts of Harry: these latter four form the Chorus, which is unusual in that the Chorus are lower in spiritual perception than most of the characters. My own opinion is that we shall have no more choruses from Mr. Eliot. This one already shows the process of disintegration, for each individual uncle or aunt is so idosyncratic that their submersion in united family feeling seems very difficult, and their united reaction is a retreat into convention.

> Why do we all behave as if the door may suddenly open,
> the curtains be drawn,
> The cellar make some frightful disclosure, the roof disappear.
> And we should cease to be sure of what is real or unreal?
> Hold tight, hold tight, we must insist that the world is what
> we have always taken it to be.

These extracts, tiny as they are, display the author's most complete achievement—the verse-forms that can include in the same play, without jar or inconsistency, the whole range of present-day speech. The play begins with a direction to the parlourmaid, but within a few lines Amy is in deep reflection, without a change in the subtle rhythm which is instantly imposed on the ear:

> Not yet. I will ring for you. It is still quite light.
> I have nothing to do but watch the days draw out.

Now that I sit in the house from October to June,
And the swallow comes too soon, and the spring will
be over
And the cuckoo will be gone before I am out again.
O sun that was once so warm! O light that was
taken for granted
When I was young and strong, and sun and light
unsought for,
And the night unfeared, and the day expected,
And clocks could be trusted, tomorrow assured,
And time would not stop in the dark.

This play is, I think, the high-water mark of modern English poetic drama up to date. Wrought with its author's flawless taste and slow, deliberate care, it is all in verse save for one newspaper-quotation, and is so much of a piece that if it is well produced you feel you live in that country house yourself. It is hard work for an audience, for the thought probes deep and there is a relatively small amount of relaxation: but it is worth it.

If T. S. Eliot is our only giant, however, there are quite a number of poets who are growing to good stature in the theatre. Before the war, there was a play of large promise from Stephen Spender called "Trial of a Judge", an immature but most stimulating one from Auden and Isherwood, "The Ascent of F6", and a classical translation from Louis MacNiece, who has since become a master of poetic drama for the radio. These one might describe as the more modern "school": but there were some followers of the more traditional methods employed by the Poet Laureate: most notable was Christopher Hassell, whose "Christ's Comet" has recently been brought to new life, ten years after its first production, on the Third Programme. Gordon Bottomley, almost 70, wrote his first comedy, the accomplished and charming "Kate Kennedy".

During the war, there seemed to be a pause: but growth was going on underground. As I travelled over England and Scotland with The Pilgrim Players, I found two encouragements. First, that audiences were willing to listen and to be moved by these supposedly "difficult" poetic plays. Eliot and even Charles Williams were food for hungry audiences: what is more, people found that the nourishment given by these plays sustained them for a long time. Secondly, that scattered over the country there were poets wanting to write for the stage. In Cumberland, Norman Nicholson was spurred on by a Pilgrim performance of "Murder": in Cornwall, Ronald Duncan had been hammering out a play which our production of "The Way of the Cross" caused him to bring to me: and so on. The upshot was an attempt to start in London a workshop for the poets, where they could see their efforts produced, attend rehearsals, work at the script with the producer, and learn the craft of the theatre.

The Mercury season of New Plays by Poets opened in September, 1945, with a little bagful of plays and a lot of promises of more. There was first Norman Nicholson's "The Old Man of the Mountains", which transported the Elijah story into contemporary Cumberland. In the Mercury version, the translation into modern terms was insufficiently complete, and the published last act is a bad mistake, but it has been well corrected in the version recently seen on tour and this is one of the most satisfactory jobs done in the poet's workshop. The play is fresh and vigorous, combining a rich dialect in prose with some resounding verse:

> No, stay with me. Stay and watch an old man rave
> Like a thorn tree on the tops with the wind in it,
> And the mad starlings burbling in its boughs.
> And if the trunk should crack and split.
> And dry mouths open in the bark, and every mouth
> Crying: 'Hark, at the wind in my leaves . . .
> Brother, it is the voice of God'; and every mouth
> Crying: 'Hark, at the birds in my branches,
> Brother, they are the hierarchs of the angels of heaven,
> Setting up an aviary in my brain'. If such you saw,
> If such you heard, it would not be madder
> Than what you see and hear . . . an old man
> With a swamp in his skull: One whom the toads
> Croak at mockingly, and the yaffle laughs
> Beneath the sun's long sneer at noon. Go, now,
> I will not hide from the derision of the sky,
> I will eye it as an eagle eyes the sun. Go,
> Leap upon the stones. Search the sky for a cloud,
> Tell me there is none and let me shake my fist
> In the defiance of despair.

Country plays are notoriously difficult for professional actors to do well: they can never treat dialect speech naturally. Mr. Nicholson's play has found its best interpreters, I expect, in the North-country productions, which have been many, and sounded very good on North Regional last February.

The next, and the most successful English Mercury play was Mr. Duncan's "This Way to the Tomb!" Its construction was original; the first half a carefully wrought Masque using the most elaborate verse-forms, the second a riotous satire on contemporary follies in religion. Benjamin Britten added a great deal to its beauties by skilful and apposite music, but the poet himself poured out in song the riches of his country life and work as a farmer, so that his Saint Anthony ravished the soul by his speech:

> It is winter. Again, winter.
> The blind mouth of the earth sucks a dry udder.
> Only leaves, falling over and over, disturb the
> year's slumber.

And my mind clings to the past,
Like a velvet train dragged on wet grass.
Once it was spring. The almond broke
Out with a mad frail enthusiasm from its tight bark:
And the cherry and the peach stood within my reach.
My glad eyes grazed on the glory of it.
And my heart held part of the power of it.
It was summer. The sun shining.
A slow wind walked the cornfields combing
Wheat into waves, which followed one after another,
till the whole was flowing.
Then my soul crowed like a cock loud
And trod the future like a lot of hens, proud.
Autumn's a woman. A woman's a vine,
Carrying the soil's lust into the pressed wine:
Both blood and the grape, incarnadine.
I heaped a girl's lap with lemons
Oh! who could not sing of such a season.
But it is winter. Again winter.
And I am an old man with a fixed future;
To which the sand in the glass dribbles as I sit by
the water
Dreaming, resisting contemplation
On the precise point of meditation,
Which is my fear. What are my fears?
Of all my fears, it is loneliness which wears
The worst mask, with lips bitten and bleeding, and
its eyes red with tears.
Loneliness is the soul's wilderness and I
Am alone, Jesu, unless in Thy Company.

This play had a sharp relevance to our times, in the spiritual search which it presented: and it drew a great number of young people to what was certainly no light entertainment! Anne Ridler followed with "The Shadow Factory", which had its chief interest in the conflict of ideas on running a machine-age, and tried some useful if not immediately successful experiments in short-line verse dialogue. In the spring, a poet *in* the theatre appeared—Christopher Fry, then producer at the Oxford Playhouse, with the brilliantly witty comedy "A Phoenix Too Frequent". Mr. Fry, like Mr. Eliot, used verse throughout his play, and created a form, rather more sinewy than Mr. Eliot's, in which to do it.

Dynamene: He was the ship. He had such a deck, Doto,
Such a white, scrubbed deck. Such a stern prow,
Such a proud stern, so slim from port to starboard.
If ever you meet a man with such fine masts
Give your life to him, Doto. The figurehead

Bore his own features, so serene in the brow
And hung with a little seaweed. O Virilius,
My husband, you have left a wake in my soul.
You cut the glassy water with a diamond keel.
I must cry again.

Doto: What, when you mean to join him?
Don't you believe he will be glad to see you, madam?
Thankful to see you, I should imagine, among
Them shapes and shades; all shapes of shapes and all
Shades of shades, from what I've heard. I know
I shall feel odd at first with Cerberus,
Sop or no sop. Still I know how you feel, madam.
You think he may find a temptation in Hades.
I shouldn't worry. It would help him to settle down.

This play, all in verse, presents another example of how, in good poetic drama, the verse-form itself increases the dramatic effect of lines. Shakespeare knew this well, of course, and if you were to hear a Shakespeare play spoken so as to give full value to rhythm, line-ending and the shifting of stresses, you would be startled by their dramatic effect. It is one of the most encouraging of signs that so many of our contemporary poets, Ronald Duncan and Christopher Fry notably, as well as Mr. Eliot himself, have realised this and are putting it into practice.

The chief criticism levelled against this new poetic drama is that it lacks grandeur. There are none of the rolling periods, no "mighty line", none of the fanfares of sound with which Shakespeare could carry us away.

Farewell the plumèd troop and the big wars
That make ambition virtue: oh farewell!
Farewell the neighing steed and the shrill trump
The spirit-stirring drum the ear-piercing fife
Pride, pomp and circumstance of glorious war . . .
Farewell; Othello's occupation's gone.

We altogether lack that, and I admit we could do with it! But are the poets to blame? They are bound, if they speak truly, to reflect in their imagination the life they see and to use as their ground-bass the speech they hear. Certain of them, like Peter Yates in his ill-fated play "The Assassin", do try a broader style, but at once (as you may hear in that play) they come near to the edge of ranting, and one slip of the actor may easily push them over into the land of Ham. All honour to those who try to enlarge the actor's lungs and uplift the auditor's heart! but till we speak a nobler tongue and find a surer faith by which to live, their way will be hard. It is not for nothing that audiences turn back with joy to Shakespeare, Webster, Marlowe. Maybe our own poetry will for a time be austerity diet: but we cannot live by the past alone, and we must, if we are to

grow a soul and form a faith, cherish those who are striving for us in the rarefied air among the peaks of Parnassus.

What may the future bring? I am full of hope for it. Some poets are now writing for the theatre and being produced. It is not at all beyond the bounds of possibility that a poetic play may become a "commercial" proposition—one or two have, and have mostly been ruined in the process. Much more promising is the rise of the major Art Theatre companies headed by the Old Vic, who, though their play policy up to date has been conservative, have the vigour needed to try new writers, and certainly M. Saint-Denis' "New Vic" will do so. The first hesitating experiments are still going on, but the poets have begun to regard the theatre once more as their territory, and we may before too long see a flowering in it of that great drama which can only be bred through the fertilising power of poetry.

TRENDS IN RECENT IRISH POETRY

BY

ROBERT GREACEN

About the end of the 'thirties, Southern Ireland, after the great flowering of the Irish Literary Movement, seemed to have gone into a fallow phase; her earlier dynamism was no longer evident. In the North of Ireland—whose main mass of population differs in religion and tradition from the rest of the country—on the other hand, a few young writers reacting against a concentrated money-complex, felt they had to get out of the provincial rut if they were to achieve anything of more than ephemeral and localised merit. This new work was based largely on English models and only in a secondary sense on Anglo-Irish: and still more remotely on the Gaelic. But a few instances can hardly constitute a movement, unless there is cohesion among the writers concerned, as well as a willing public of keen, alert and critical readers. These poets soon found themselves confronted with conditions of semi-War—Northern Ireland had one foot in the War and one out of it, for certain political reasons—while forming their audience, stuttering out poems to a chaotic world.

For the time being, some of the young poets stayed at home. During the early 'forties a group at Queen's University, Belfast, formed in a definitely *ad hoc* manner about *The Northman* magazine: Roy McFadden, John Gallen, myself and the others had little in common save a similar intellectual background. McFadden's early work, highly emotional, coloured and melodious, contrasted with the precise, almost strained severity of Gallen's clear imagery. McFadden is haunted by the evil of our time, conscious of the futility of War and despairing of man's teachability.

John Gallen, with whom I edited *The Northman*, was accidently killed early last year in India, shortly before demobilisation. A fine intellectual, we have lost one of the most alive and sensitive minds of our generation. His poetry, of which only a few short pieces appeared in English magazines and anthologies, was based on his deepest religious and emotional experiences; to it he brought his whole being. Underlying sensuous and lyric qualities is the religious pattern evolved through conflict and stern discipline of mind. He owed much to T. S. Eliot and, particularly in his earlier poems, Dylan Thomas. Both religious attitude and influences can be seen in the fine opening to "In This Dead Month", perhaps his most successfully sustained poem, published, incidentally, in *The Crown and the Sickle*:

> In this dead month, between
> the agony and the labour
> all things are dead.
> Breath of the roots is still, and in the hush
> rises no scent of blood drying or of earth flowing.
> I alone am left alive, watching
> the cold convulsing of my dead members and I know
> in this dead month, that I can never die.

Two themes, one generalised and one personal, intermingle and integrate; the echoes show the assimilation of influence, not the hand of an adolescent trading in *pastiche*. The result, as in so many of his other poems, is both satisfying and beautiful.

Louis MacNeice, Belfast born, was never one of the more enthusiastic politicians of the *New Verse* movement, yet a certain section of his work—*Autumn Journal*, for instance—shows how definitely he was of it. Both he and Cecil Day Lewis (the latter was born in Eire) have interspersed in their more didactic verse many finely lyrical poems; they both use the "repeat refrain" to good effect. Both on occasion adopt Irish attitudes of thought and emotion that often are not recognised as such. It was more recently that W. R. Rodgers, really of their generation, appeared as a poet, vital, original, somewhat intoxicated by the virtuosities of verse technique. His chief influence is Hopkins which, in a man of less ability, might be exceedingly dangerous; but Rodgers, less wedded to tricks like repeated alliteration, promises a great future. How compelling he is when he writes:

> Bearnagh and Lamigan and Chimney-Rock,
> Spelga, Pulgrave and Cove—all these names lie
> Silently in my grass-grown memory,
> Each one bright and steady as a frog's eye;
> But touch it and it leaps, leaps like a bead
> Of mercury that breaks and scatters
> Suddenly in a thousand shining strings
> And running spools and ever-dwindling rings

Round the mind's bowl, till at last all drop
Lumped and leaden again to one full stop.

Another contemporary of Rodgers is John Hewitt, also an art critic of distinction. He, too, is a Belfastman—a townsman who has discovered rural Ulster, who knows and loves its soil and rocks and chequered history. Although he has been writing and publishing verse for about twenty years Hewitt has limited his audience by not publishing in book form; at last, a volume now in the press is to appear with the imprint of a leading London firm.

Shortly before the last War the early fire had gone out of nationalism in Southern Ireland, for political freedom was no longer a sharp or simple issue. Rather, during the late 'thirties the fresher minds were drawn to an undefined Left in politics and to realism in literature: there was what some considered an Irish parallel to "proletarian" writing. Patrick Kavanagh was not affected by the new winds from across the Irish Sea: his roots in peasant Monaghan, whence his family had migrated from the West, were too deep not to be strongly nationalist and Roman Catholic. But as his long poem, "The Great Hunger", was to show in 1942, he was profoundly aware of the social and personal frustration that hung like a pall over the Irish countryside. This moving poem explored the life of the Irish peasant with an understanding that would be impossible for a town poet less steeped in the life of the people. There is a devastating irony in such lines as these:

The world looks on
And talks of the peasant:
The peasant has no worries;
In his little lyrical fields
He ploughs and sows;
He eats fresh food,
He loves fresh women,
He is his own master
As it was in the Beginning
The simpleness of peasant life.

And then there is the implicit agony:

But the peasant in his little acres is tied
To a mother's womb by the wind-toughened navel-cord
Like a goat tethered to the stump of a tree—
He circles around and around wondering why it should be.

But quotation cannot give an adequate idea of "The Great Hunger", for the effect is cumulative.

F. R. Higgins, who sat at the feet of W. B. Yeats, had a strong lyrical quality, a voice of his own. I do not know whether he had a hatred for what Yeats considered the modern "rabble" equivalent of Whiggery, but he wrote no marches for the near-Fascist Blueshirts of General O'Duffy. Higgins' last book, *The Gap of Brightness*, came out shortly before

his death. I remember how in 1940, that summer of European dèbâcle, its dark, smouldering passion matched so well, in its private way, the public terror. During the last years of the nineteen-thirties Leslie Daiken, Ewart Milne and the woman poet, Blanaid Salkeld, were producing work which they have largely augmented during the past few years.

The newer arrivals are Valentin Iremonger, Pearse Hutchinson, Maurice James Craig, Freda Laughton, Sam Harrison and Nick Nicholls: all of these have written mostly in Dublin though only the first two are native Dubliners. Iremonger and Craig are nearest to what one may term "lucidity". Iremonger's work has a defined edge and bite: he veers a little to the classic in literature and has a good technical grip on his subject matter. Above all, he is not a mere propagandist. One of Valentin Iremonger's most moving poems, the one about Icarus, shows his effective control of catchword slang and colloquial comment:

> But star-gazer, big-time-going, chancer Icarus
> Like a dog on the sea lay and the girls forgot him
> And Daedalus, too busy hammering another job,
> Remembered him only in pubs. No bugler at all
> Sobbed taps for the young fool then, reported missing,
> Presumed drowned, wing-bones and feathers on the tides
> Drifting in casually, one by one.

Maurice James Craig, with a background of Belfast, Dublin and Cambridge is difficult to classify as a poet; his poems are even, well-worked, drily ironical, while his ballads have a fine gusto. In one of the latter he writes:

> O the bricks they will bleed and the rain it will weep
> And the damp Lagan fog lull the city to sleep;
> It's to hell with the future and live on the past
> *May the Lord in His mercy be kind to Belfast!*

In contrast, there is what one might rightly call a grouping of those poets who turn away deliberately from English influences to Gaelic and traditional sources—Austin Clarke, Robert Farren and Padraic Fallon among others. Donagh MacDonagh, who has written an entertaining verse-play, "Happy as Larry," shares of both worlds. Therefore one sees the conflict of two tendencies, an inward and an outward movement. Except for the Northern writers and exceptions here and there in the South, poetry has in a sense leap-frogged over the violently social and War phases, to something like emphasis on the personal vision. Like Auden, many Irish poets are attempting to strike that all-but-impossible balance:

> There is no such thing as the state
> And no one exists alone.

THE BAYSWATER VENTURE

A love of music is often associated with a love of poetry, and there are attractive possibilities in an attempt to bring poetry lovers and music lovers together for their mutual delight. Such an attempt has been conspicuously successful in the Progressive League's Music and Poetry gatherings, held once a month from September to May in the hall of the Ethical Church, Bayswater. It is now nearly six years since, through the generous co-operation of the Ethical Church authorities, the venture was launched; and while, in its early stages, it was hampered by black-out restrictions, by innumerable other practical difficulties and, worst of all, by lack of funds, it is now established as a modest, though very real, contribution to the cultural life of London.

There can be no doubt that the success of the enterprise is, to some very considerable extent, due to the way in which the meetings are run. Every effort is made to create a friendly and informal atmosphere. There are no cliques : newcomers are given a genuine welcome. There is tea and talk round the large fireplace, with abundant opportunity for personal contacts.

As regards the poetry and music presented, the organizers can congratulate themselves on having attracted many well-known contemporary poets and numerous accomplished musicians and readers. In addition, opportunities for reading their work have been provided for many less well-known poets. There is still room for widening of scope, however. The presentation of music for combinations of several instruments is an expensive matter, and as the venture is entirely dependent upon collections, the musical side has suffered under limitations which only an increase in the present regular attendance of about seventy can remove.

Great importance is attached to the inclusion of a high proportion of contemporary work and, as regards poetry, this has been fully realized, largely owing to the enthusiasm of Alec Craig, who, until he went abroad in 1947, was responsible for the literary side of the programmes. Since then his work has been very successfully continued by Ross Nichols. Contemporary music presents many technical difficulties, though, in the last resort, the matter is one of adequate funds. But gratifying progress has been made and the venture has been supported by many fine musicians who have given their enthusiastic co-operation regardless of the small fees which are all that can be offered.

Outstanding recent readings have been those of the "Crucified Cupid" of Ausonius by John Heath-Stubbs, of Gaelic translations by W. R. MacAlpine, of the "Wreck of the Deutschland" by T. Weston Ramsey, President of the Poetry Society, of Robert Frost and W. R. Rodgers and of his own work by Patric Stevenson. James Kirkup has several times read his own work. Readings have been arranged from as wide a choice of

sources as possible, and Australian poetry has been represented by Rosemary Dobson and an extensive selection read by Jack Lindsay, while a number of modern translations had a joint reading by Neville Braybrooke and Elizabeth King. Another joint reading was that by Howard Sergeant and Muriel Spark. Dylan Thomas, George Barker, Tambimuttu and more recently Clifford Dyment have been other readers, and a semi-dramatic reading of part of "Mourning Becomes Elektra" with a professional cast was lately arranged by Mary Grew.

The music presented during the 1947-48 season took the form of a series of short recitals by single performers. These included Friedrich Buxbaum ('cello), Elsa Cross (piano) and Rosemary Rapaport (violin). Mention should also be made of the recitals by Victoria Kingsley (songs from the Hebrides, Spain and Latin America, to her own guitar accompaniment), Marianne Mislap—Kapper (German and Austrian lieder) and Alison Purves (early and contemporary English songs, with a group by Brahms). It is an indication of the congenial atmosphere created at the meetings that musicians who once appear at them are eager to appear again.

In addition to the main series of meetings, the organizers contemplate the holding of occasional week-end parties for which extensive programmes of interesting work will be arranged. The first of these took place at Pendley Manor, Tring, in October, 1947. It achieved a remarkable success and it is hoped that a similar week-end party will be possible during 1948.

The 1948-49 season will begin in the autumn. The organizers will be glad to send monthly circulars to applicants who should write to Ross Nichols, 70, Baron's Court Road, W.14 (Poetry) or to Ashton Burall, 2, Antrim House, Antrim Road, N.W.3 (Music).

Ross Nichols.
Ashton Burall.

LETTERS TO THE EDITOR

Madam,

What is wrong with modern poetry?

We are a "nation whose people have forgotten poetry, and whose poets have forgotten the people". What workman now reads modern poetry in his lunch-hour? And why not? This question will not be answered by citing instances of workmen who do so: they are merely the rare exceptions that prove the rule. Some workman (let us suppose) longing for truth and beauty to light up the dull tedium of his life, and having heard somewhere that poetry *is* truth and beauty, goes into a public library to look for some poetry. He picks up an anthology of modern verse, and the first poem he tries to read is Mr. T. S. Eliot's "The Waste Land".

Well, I have read "The Waste Land", and I prophesy that that workman will be disappointed. He will not find truth and beauty there. He

will be puzzled, perhaps faintly disgusted; and he may, if he is easily discouraged, turn away from poetry in the belief that it is not for him. He will be wrong; it is for him, and if it does not appeal to him—the simple person longing for truth and beauty, it is missing its mark.

And so much of what is called Poetry nowadays does miss that mark. For that is the mark. No great poet misses it. I have seen a packed audience of country people, a third of them children, raised to a high pitch of enthusiasm by Shakespeare's "Twelfth Night"—not merely by the comic scenes, but by the poetry. Let me examine Modern Poetry in the light of this ideal—the ideal of simply appealing to those that sincerely desire truth and beauty.

It fails by being introspective. The great poets express and even proclaim their feelings, but they seldom describe or analyse them. And their poetic feelings are nearly always aroused by what is outside themselves; Burns' by a daisy or a field-mouse, Wordsworth's by a girl reaping the corn.

It fails yet more by being esoteric: that is, by appealing to professional poets and a narrow circle of poetry-lovers.

Poetry is two things wedded together, sound and sense: and the most important single quality in the sound-aspect of Poetry is *melody*: not rhyme nor even rhythm, but *melody*. Nobody who does not possess an instinctive sense of the music of words in a high degree, has any right to call himself a poet. A great deal of modern verse is written by people who give no sign of having realised that such a thing as word-melody exists.

Free-verse, which is the same thing as poetic prose, has its own kind of rhythm, often a very beautiful one. But it is quite different from the regular rhythm of true verse. You can be quite sure that a poem is incompetently written, when you cannot tell whether it is intended to be true verse or free-verse. This unfortunate indecision is characteristic of a great deal of modern poetry. The man-in-the-street knows this difference between verse-rhythm and prose-rhythm; you may make him like both, but you cannot make him like their hybrid.

Finally, may I put in a plea for disciples for Gerard Manley Hopkins, whose philosophy I do not share, but whose mastery of technique I admire very much? He, it seems to me, discovered that common speech, when it is inspired by high feeling, has a true verse-rhythm. His rhythms are not hybrids between prose and verse, but the highest development of verse-rhythm in English hitherto.

I am, etc.,

WALTER DRAKE.

Madam,

Useful as Mr. Stanford's article on T. S. Eliot, in your February number was, as a study of the poet's technique, it gave rise to a certain doubt in my mind which I should like to submit to Mr. Stanford's and your readers' scrutiny.

In his second paragraph, Mr. Stanford pointed out that, born poet or not, Mr. Eliot employs "every strategy of intelligence to heighten the effects of imagination" and went on to say that, unlike the poetic trickster's, Mr. Eliot's strategy is "one of forethought rather than deceit, of preparation and calculation rather than of deception and artifice". With these observations no one would, I think, quarrel. Mr. Stanford concluded his paragraph, however, with the conclusion that "In this, then, resides the importance of Eliot for his own contemporaries and for all who follow after". It is this statement whose truth I question.

In the first place, I doubt whether we are in a position to say quite so arbitrarily to which aspect of Mr. Eliot's work our successors will attach importance. In the second place, to say, in any case, that Mr. Eliot's importance lies in his strategy seems to me to be a rather barren estimate of the significance of his poetry, underestimating, as it does, the poet's patient, insistent and constantly reiterated spiritual and sociological teaching. I find it hard to believe that anyone, who has submitted himself humbly to Mr. Eliot's critical commentaries on man, the individual soul, and man, the social being in a capitalist, commercial society, could agree with this judgment. Indeed, I doubt whether such a judgment could ever be apt when passed on the work of any writer of comparable stature. The importance of Eliot's matter needs no laboured argument to support it. The international reputation of "The Waste Land", as a social document, indicting an era, is alone sufficient evidence.

That Eliot has always been a humble, painstaking and fastidious workman in the craft of words and that he has frequently commented on his craft in his poetry should not misguide us. It is true that even in the spiritual sermons of The Four Quartets, conscious of his craft, he pauses many times for a reflection on the struggle with words; yet who would pretend that the significance of these last masterpieces lay in these references to a craft, or in their technical cunning? He, who wrote in them:

> "Since our concern was speech, and speech impelled us
> To purify the dialect of the tribe . . ."
> did not omit to add:
> "And urge the mind to aftersight and foresight".

But there is another aspect of this judgment of Mr. Stanford's which I should like to mention; one which may, perhaps, give it a wider, deeper significance. It provides, I feel, as vivid example as one could expect to find, of the tendency of modern criticism to escape from a consideration of a writer's credo, from the human issues raised by his work, often moral issues, by concentration on his technique. Mr. Stanford's statement, whether deliberately or unconsciously, ignores the challenge of Mr. Eliot's poetry: its condemnation of "this twittering world" and its interpretation and commentary on the spiritual life as the way out. Spiritual issues, morals, belief, may, or may not be proper matter for literary criticism.

They form, in any case, some of the richest themes for literature, and I do not see how criticism can avoid them—and, at the same time, avoid sterility. But an examination of a poet's work, put forward as an example for younger poets, which gives pre-eminence to the poet's "strategy" to the neglect of his subject matter, can, I am convinced, at the moment, be neither a truly informative, nor a wholly reliable guide.

What a poor tribute it is, after all, to Eliot's life of dedication. How desolating it must be to one, who, loving words, has never forgotten that they are mere tools, the means to an end, to hear that the importance of this:

"O weariness of men who turn from God
To the grandeur of your mind and the glory of your action,
To arts and inventions and daring enterprises,
To schemes of human greatness thoroughly discredited,
Binding the earth and water to your service,
Exploiting the seas and developing the mountains,
Dividing the stars into common and preferred,
Engaged in devising the perfect refrigerator,
Engaged in working out a rational morality,
Engaged in printing as many books as possible,
Plotting of happiness and flinging empty bottles,
Turning from your vacancy to fevered enthusiasm
For nation or race or what you call humanity;
Though you forget the way to the Temple,
There is one who remembers the way to your door:
Life you may evade, but Death you shall not.
You shall not deny the Stranger."

and this:

"The only wisdom we can hope to acquire
Is the wisdom of humility: humility is endless."

lies in "strategy".

I would rather say that Mr. Eliot's example is the example of all true artists: that of the subjugation of strategy to the end, the harmonisation of matter and method that is the essential of all true art. And that, in so far as Mr. Eliot makes us rather too aware of his effort as a craftsman, this is a flaw, not an example.

I am, etc.,

James Brockway.

THE PREMIUM REPORT AND AWARD

I am happy to say that this is the best set of Premium entries I have yet seen—and very large it was too. It is so good that I have had to divide the prize equally, among five entrants ; I do not mean that they are all of identical quality, but the differences do not seem to me sufficiently great to be assessed as a plus or minus worth noting.

The poem by John Bayliss has something of the quality of a wood engraving, still and cold with bright points of light on the dark expanse. The rhythm balance and alliterative effects are perfectly controlled.

Stefanie Fone's "Time for Singing" is a smooth and easy-running sonnet, unforced in its rhymes and sequences; the contrast between octet and sextet is finely drawn, the climax of the former sufficient not to stray. The fifth line is memorable, the music of the twelfth haunting, a dying fall indeed.

Dorothy Spring's poem shows that something can still be done with a well-tried theme, that freshness and power can rise even today outside the crowded circle of modernity. The use of the doubled half-rhyme is very effective, emphasising the aside character of the bracketed verses.

"Galatea," by Malcolm H. Tattersall, is another sonnet, but so different; there is great strength in its construction and a certain roughness of texture, that make so admirable a foil for the suggestive tenuity of the context. This sonnet will pay well for several readings, till it swings up, like the riding moon, to the full power and beauty of the last line.

Miss W. V. Wall's poem comes into this group for its magical, evocative effect. This is the true pouring out of poetry that seems to come white-hot and almost without thought, crowding up out of the cauldron, an incantation, a spell. One's reaction to a poem like this is more of feeling than of intelligence, and so was mine. Great power here, and a certain terror which comes to focus on the mouse.

Of the highly commended, I especially mention "Death of a Grandfather" by Celia Randall, "Stonehenge" by G. M. Hawksley and "To a Gun-dog" by John Blandford, all very good poems.

T. W. Ramsey.

The full lists are :—

Highly Commended

John Blandford
G. M. Hawksley
Ursula Tighe Hopkins
Michael Jones
George Moor
Celia Randall
E. Roseveare
Francis Stephenson

Commended

Vere Arnot
Daphne Child
Edmund Harding
Richard James
Margit Kertesyffay
A. Mountaine
William Porritt
Joan Southey
Janet Urquhart
F. M. Venables

AN OLD WOMAN IN PARLIAMENT SQUARE

Under the shadow of the clock I sit,
Where small keen winds like needles prick my bones.
Night drags my lank grey hair into its net
And my shrunk eyes see where the clock face burns.

The quarters strike across the wide cold square.
Late traffic fades. The dark light of the stars
Chafes my thin cheek like blossom on a briar
Caught by the winds too early in their wars.

The last man goes. His footsteps merge and die
Far out upon the bridge, whose lamps glow on
As they will do until the chill of day
Breaks through my eyes and finds me still alone.

JOHN BAYLISS.

A TIME FOR SINGING

The old have hearts for singing, nursed among
  The quiet streets and moments; their desire
  Can call again the music and the lyre.
But we their children, how should we have sung,
Who have no taste but death upon our tongue?
  And to what harmonies shall we aspire
  Who have no knowledge of the world but fire?
We have no heart for singing—being young.

And yet, when ever clear child-eyes discover
  The ways where angels walked beneath the sun;
    When one man seeks his wisdom in brown earth;
When ever lover weeps slow tears for lover;
  Know then, the time of singing is not done,
    And out of ashes comes the phoenix birth.

STEFANIE FONE.

SONG OF THE UNBIDDEN GUEST

Lead your love where dancers all
Hold May-morning festival:
Patient in the blossoming ground
Waits the worm and makes no sound.

(Have I not whispered in your ear
That the world's beauty is no more
Than bloom upon the peach's skin
That hides the maggot deep within?)

Tell her as she dances by
Of delight that will not die:
Patient under lip and cheek
Wait the bones and do not speak.
(Have I not whispered in your ear
That the world's kindness is no more
Than honey that the gods have spread
To hide the mildew in the bread?)

DOROTHY SPRING.

GALATEA

A vision wrought from the Mind's overplus
Of heat—with mould to match Her royal state,
Pointed or round, whereon shall move or wait
Submissive shade or light superfluous;

Of antique skies the Hesper-Phosphorus,
Phoebus' or Dian's ward; now soon, now late;
Minute, enormous; pale or roseate;
Sombre, benign—Whose ardour graved you thus:

At astral conclave carven gem among
Our Midas-hoard of dreams, through various change
From dark to bright disambered or impearled;
Astride the dawn with airy vestments hung
In folds far-off; by noon a mountain range
Supine upon the margin of the world.

MALCOLM H. TATTERSALL.

THREE STRANGE WOMEN WAILING ME

Three strange women wailing me
The maid, the mother and the wild Banshee.
Three white shells, and three shells more;
Three white houses on a soundless shore.
What I was, and what I would,
And what I should have been if I could.

Three bright fish on the wise sea's breast.
Three falcons flying towards the west.
Three dark doors of mystery;
Three strong locks with but one key.
Three unknown roads before my feet.
Three golden ears on a stalk of wheat.
Three, and three, and three, my mouse;
Three women living in one house.
Never alone, my soul to save;
Three women lying in one grave.

W. V. WALL.

ANNOUNCEMENTS

A SHORTHAND-TYPIST WITH SECRETARIAL EXPERIENCE
is required at the Poetry Society's Headquarters.
Hours: 9.30 a.m. to 5.30 p.m. (1 hour lunch, no Saturdays).
Salary: £208 x 13 x £312 per annum.
Apply: The Treasurer, The Poetry Society, 33 Portman Square, W.1

It has been suggested by some members of the Poetry Society that a presentation fund be started on the occasion of the retirement of Mr. Galloway Kyle, formerly Director of the Poetry Society and Editor of *The Poetry Review*. The following subscribers to the fund are acknowledged in addition to the list printed in the last issue of *The Poetry Review*.

Miss E. E. Willis; Miss E. M. Horsley; Miss M. Smith; Mr. Charles Whitly.

Will members who would like to contribute to the fund please communicate with the General Secretary, The Poetry Society, 33 Portman Square, W.1.

A Special Prize for Spoken English

To be awarded annually to selected children from schools in Chelsea and Kensington

The object of this prize is to encourage the appreciation of poetry amongst London school children, and promote a good standard of spoken English. The prize is to consist of a Book selected by the President and Committee of the Chelsea Poetry Circle.

For further particulars of the above Competition please apply to John E. Carroll, Hon. Secretary, 5 Redesdale Street, Chelsea, S.W.3.

The Poetry Society's Critical Service

This service continues to grow in popularity. A minimum fee of 5s. is charged and two poems only may be submitted for this sum. Additional poems cost 2s. each for criticism and it is particularly requested that all poems submitted should be typed as this is as much in the author's interest as in the critic's.

The Premium Competition

The above competition continues as before with the offer of £10 in prize money which may be won outright by a single competitor or may be divided at the discretion of the Premium Adjudicator. It has been found necessary to charge an entrance fee of 2s. 6d. in future, and a stamped addressed envelope should be enclosed if a receipt is desired Competitors must observe the following rules:

1. One poem only may be entered by each competitor.
2. The poem must be typed and no stamped and addressed envelope will be required unless a receipt is desired. See Rule 3.
3. Competitors must retain copies of their poems, as none will be returned in future.
4. Entries must be addressed "Premium Competition", The Poetry Review, 33 Portman Square, London, W.1.
5. Each poem must bear the author's name and address and the words "For Premium Competition closing————1st".
6. Entrants must be members of the Poetry Society or regular subscribers to The Poetry Review.
7. The winners of a full Premium or one who has shared the prize twice will not be eligible for re-entry for twelve months.

The closing date for the next Premium Competition will be November 1st.

The Love Lyric Competition for 1948

This annual competition offers £10 for an original love lyric. Competitors must observe the following rules:

1. Not more than two poems may be entered by each competitor.
2. The length of an entry must not exceed thirty lines.
3. Entries must be typewritten, bear the name and address of the author and be addressed "Love Lyric Competition".
4. The Competition will close on 31st December, 1948.
5. The Editor reserves the right to publish any poem submitted, in The Poetry Review, but without prejudice to the author's right of publication elsewhere later.
6. Competitors must be members of the Poetry Society.
7. If competitors wish their entries returned will they please enclose a stamped addressed envelope.

A Scots Poetry Competition

Mr. William Hutcheson, C.E., one of the soldier poets of the 17th Highland Light Infantry in the 1914-18 war, who subsequently published a collection of modern Scots verse, Chota Chants, has provided us with three consecutive premiums of £5 each for the encouragement and recognition of Scots poets of to-day. The third £5 is now offered for poems addressed "Doric, The Poetry Society, 33 Portman Square, London, W.1", and received not later than November 1st, 1948. There should be not more than two entries from each competitor. Archaic and abstruse words should be avoided; if a stiff Doric term is used, it should be essential and virile and easily understood from the context. The poems should have a Scots flavour.

Lord Alfred Douglas Sonnet Competition for 1948

The result of the Lord Alfred Douglas Sonnet Competition will be published in the December number of *The Poetry Review*.

Howard Parsons Epigram Competition

The Poetry Society is empowered by Mr. Howard Parsons, a long-standing member of the Society, to offer the following prizes endowed by him for an Epigram Competition.

1st prize, 5 guineas ; 2nd prize, 2 guineas ; 3rd prize, 1 guinea.

Entries should be marked " Epigram " and should not bear a stamped addressed envelope, as MSS. cannot be returned. They should be addressed to The Poetry Society, 33 Portman Square, London, W.1, to reach here not later than 1st March, 1949.

The Society reserves the right to extend the closing date of the competition should none of the entries reach the required standard.

The Poetry Society's Auditions and Examinations

The Poetry Society has conducted auditions and examinations in the art of verse-speaking for many years, and its success in this valuable cultural activity is attested by the fact that the number of schools and institutions in all parts of England which the Society examines, continually increases.

Junior preliminary examinations are available for the youngest children and these continue through various grades, up to the final test for adult students, for which the Society's gold medal is the final award for success.

General regulations governing these auditions have recently been revised. Copies may be obtained on application to The Registrar, 33 Portman Square, London, W.1., with whom arrangements can be made for auditions for schools, colleges or private individuals. Applications for audition dates should be made as long as possible beforehand.

The following is the list of Gold Medal examiners for the Poetry Society:—Miss Peggy Ashcroft, Mr. W. G. Bebbington, Lady Buckmaster, Mr. John Chandos, Mr. Patric Dickinson, Mr. Alec Guinness, Mr. John Holgate, Miss Margaret Rutherford, Lady Margaret Sackville, The Hon. V. Sackville West, Mr. Clive Sansom, Dame Sybil Thorndike, Mr. Donald Wolfitt, Mr. George Wood.

The list of regular examiners for the Poetry Society is as follows:—Miss Ann Clark, Miss Mary Cole, Miss Lesley Crease, Miss Jean Hamilton, Miss Mollie Hudson, Miss Dorothy Robinson, Miss Roberta Shuttleworth, Miss Kathleen Stone.

The Poetry Hour at 33 Portman Square

Friday readings and recitals at the Poetry Society Headquarters will be resumed on 1st October. For particulars apply to the Secretary, 33 Portman Square, W.1.

Submissions to the Editor

Manuscripts may be submitted to the Editor, The Poetry Review, 33 Portman Square, London, W.1., for consideration in the ordinary way apart from entries for competitions. Such MSS. should be typewritten, or if this is impossible, printed legibly, and if their return is desired should be accompanied by a stamped and addressed envelope. The Editor can accept no responsibility for the safety of MSS. although every care will be taken to ensure this. Acceptance will not imply immediate publication; payment will be made upon publication.

Centre Meetings

Secretaries of Centres of the Poetry Society are invited to send notices of their forthcoming programmes to the Editor for publication in The Poetry Review.

The Buckinghamshire Centre of the Poetry Society
Programme, 1948

Reading by members—unless otherwise stated—at the following addresses:—

October 9th at 3 p.m. Cathleen Nesbitt reading poems of her own selection. St. Bernard's Convent, High Wycombe. This meeting is open to the public.

November 13th at 2.45 p.m. Shakespeare's Cymbeline. Mrs. E. Van den Bergh, Beacon View, Penn.

December 11th at 3 p.m. Members' own choice of poems by living authors. British Legion, Tylers Green.

The Liverpool Centre of the Poetry Society

A centre of the Poetry Society has been formed in Liverpool, and will meet regularly at the premises of Messrs. Rushworth & Dreaper, 11-17 Islington, Liverpool 3, who have kindly consented to the use of their music room. The President of the Centre is Mr. Howard Sergeant.

The following readings have been arranged to the end of the year: 28th October, Professor L. C. Martin, M.A., B.Litt. (Professor of English, Liverpool University), "The Making of Poetry"; 25th November, J. Redwood Anderson, "Pillars to Remembrance"; 30th December, Members' Verse Writing Competition.

Meetings are held at 6.30 p.m. on the above dates at Messrs. Rushworth & Dreaper, 11-17 Islington, Liverpool, 3.

All enquiries should be addressed to the Hon. Secretary, Mrs. Lallie Roberts, 89 Bowring Park Avenue, Liverpool 16.

Hampstead Centre of the Poetry Society

Meetings will be held at 9 Wentworth Mansions, Keats Grove, N.W.3, by invitation of Miss M. H. Huntsman (Hon. Sec.), on the first and third Thursdays, from 8 to 9-30 p.m.

The following programme of readings has been drawn up for the period between October 7, 1948, and January 20, 1949, inclusive.

1948		
October	7	Cats and Dogs.
,,	21	David Grant; introduced by Mr. H. K. Grant.
November	4	"Cain, a Mystery", by Lord Byron.
,,	18	T. S. Eliot; and Alice Meynell.
December	2	Translations, including poems from the Chinese.
,,	16	No Meeting.
1949		
January	6	Hope, and Courage.
,,	20	Scenes from Shakespeare's lesser known Plays.

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